Subjectivity In American Popular Metal: Contemporary Gothic, The Body, The Grotesque, and The Child.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the subject in Popular American Metal music and culture during the period 1994-2004, concentrating on key artists of the period: Korn, Slipknot, Marilyn Manson, Nine Inch Nails, Tura Satana and My Ruin. Starting from the premise that the subject is consistently portrayed as being at a time of crisis, the thesis draws on textual analysis as an under appreciated approach to popular music, supplemented by theories of stardom in order to examine subjectivity. The study is situated in the context of the growing area of the contemporary gothic, and produces a model of subjectivity specific to this period: the contemporary gothic subject. This model is then used throughout to explore recurrent themes and richly symbolic elements of the music and culture: the body, pain and violence, the grotesque and the monstrous, and the figure of the child, representing a usage of the contemporary gothic that has not previously been attempted. Attention is also paid throughout to the specific late capitalist American cultural context in which the work of these artists is situated, and gives attention to the contradictions inherent in a musical form which is couched in commodity culture but which is highly invested in notions of the 'Alternative'.

In the first chapter I propose the model of the contemporary gothic subject for application to the work of Popular Metal artists of the period, drawing on established theories of the contemporary gothic and Michel Foucault's theory of confession. The second chapter focuses on instances of violence to the body and the recurrent themes of pain and violence, which are explained through the model of corporeal verification and consensual violence. In the third chapter I explore the contemporary gothic subject in the tradition of the grotesque and the monstrous, drawing on theories of the gothic monster, to suggest that the subject is engaged in a negotiation of the boundaries between self and other. The fourth chapter concentrates on the figure of the child, drawing on theories of horror film and fiction and the tradition of the Evil Innocent and the Gothic child. The

final chapter is a case study of Marilyn Manson, exploring his role as a paradigmatic example of contemporary gothic subjectivity.

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Introduction

This project began with the intention to examine the presentation of self in Popular Metal music and culture at the turn of the twenty-first century, concentrating on the work of certain prominent musicians of the period. I was interested by the seeming paradox of the existence of a music culture that defined itself against the mainstream, and yet that was itself becoming more fashionable and ultimately co-opted into that mainstream. During this same period, many researchers had become increasingly interested in the resurgence of the gothic mode in popular culture, identifying a particular contemporary gothic, although this has not been applied to popular music in any sustained manner. The work of those artists whom I studied displayed a recurrent concern with issues of subjectivity, where considerable attention was given to the production of subjectivity in relation to past trauma, which has much sympathy with theories of the contemporary gothic. Other recurrent themes such as pain, self-hate and childhood became the starting point for chapters in this thesis. Also important was the persistence of an oppositional notion of 'them and us', in which the artist allied themselves with the audience in an inference of community and shared understanding while differentiating themselves from 'normal' society. I have chosen to describe the group of artists whose work I focus on here as 'Popular Metal'. Although Metal has many subgenres of its own, the artists I have chosen to study are wider in their appeal than, for example, Extreme or Black Metal, and have been more commercially successful. I had initially begun by using the term 'Rock' to describe these artists, however I feel that it is too general a term to use for this group in particular. Metal may be positioned as either a partner to, or subgenre of Rock, and with which it shares much ideological ground, especially in terms of issues of authenticity. There is a certain amount of fluidity to the use of these terms, but where 'Rock' is considered to be more accessible and to refer to a wider category, 'Metal' is more specialist, 'darker', or 'harder'. It remains though that 'Rock' is a widely-used umbrella term, and there are some instances throughout the thesis, such as during the discussion of

issues of authenticity, where it remains as such. I have also used the term 'Alternative' throughout to describe the culture which, often because of limited sites of socialisation, brings together fans of different Rock and Metal subgenres.

The work I have done focuses upon popular North American Popular Metal musicians working during the period 1994 – 2004. Although some artists have released work in the years immediately proceeding or following this time frame, I have chosen to focus on this period in particular because of various changes that occurred within the music, culture and the industry at this time. The early nineties were dominated by Grunge, a genre of music typified by the hugely successful band Nirvana. Its emergence can be seen as a reaction against the commercialism and pomposity of 'Hair Metal' bands popular in the 1980s, favouring a much less polished style of dress, a vocal style that was more concerned with the scream than falsetto, and an approach to the music industry which superficially at least favoured independent production over the major record labels. Nirvana's lead singer, Kurt Cobain, eventually committed suicide in 1994, an event that to a great extent marked the end of the Grunge period, and ensured both Nirvana and Cobain's mythologisation in the popular music canon. It was also in 1994 that Korn and Marilyn Manson, two of the main artists I shall study here, released their debut albums. This period saw the rise of a new subgenre called Nu-Metal, and it ends with the development of Emo, a subgenre of particular popularity at the time of writing, that attracts derision and sometimes violence toward its fans, and has attracted a certain degree of moral panic concerning its supposed glorification of self harm and suicide. Nu-Metal is characterised by the use of downtuned guitars, a quiet / loud dynamic that is reminiscent of Grunge, and in some cases the use of turntables and samplers as well as the more traditional line up of guitar, bass, and drums. Nu-metal lyrics deal generally with isolation, alienation, family breakup, self-hate and anger. The bands Korn, Slipknot, Limp Bizkit, Deftones, Disturbed, Staind, My Ruin and Static-X are all associated with the Nu-Metal label, whilst some artists such as Limp Bizkit are sometimes termed 'Rap metal' because

of the use of Rap in the vocals. Hip-hop's influence upon the subgenre is unusual but not groundbreaking: the first Rock/Rap crossover is probably the re-release of Stadium Rock band Aerosmith's single 'Walk This Way' in 1986 featuring rap artists Run DMC. Although the rise in popularity of many Nu-Metal acts during this period was one of the main factors in the surge in popularity of Rock and Metal music in general, there are few – if any – artists who would choose to associate themselves with the label. Even Ross Robinson, who produced Korn's self-titled debut released in 1994, and who went on to become a highly influential figure in production and recording of Nu-Metal, is quick to distance himself from it, based largely on what he sees as the derivative nature of many of the acts involved:

> We created a genre of music which today I think totally sucks. I'd hate to do this now. I don't hate Korn, but I really dislike all the bands copying them. It's time for a change. At the time it was OK, but now it's not cool for me. I don't think it's good any more at all. Anything I can do to destroy that genre today I will, 'cause any band that copies it is pure garbage. Total garbage.[1]

Robinson's view upon the sub-genre is not an isolated one: although there are other surviving acts who were initially labelled Nu-Metal, such as Deftones, the label is not widely used, is widely disliked and even ridiculed in both the music press and in fan discourse, and its death has been proclaimed on more than one occasion in the pages of *Kerrang!* magazine. However, Korn, like contemporaries Deftones, have survived and are still producing new work. It should be noted however that Nu-Metal was by no means the only musical style prevalent during this period: Industrial Metal bands such as Nine Inch Nails and Ministry were also active (these acts in particular have had very long careers), Punk bands such as Green Day and The Distillers, and of course Marilyn Manson, who has been associated with the Nu-Metal, Industrial and Goth labels, although arguably he fits comfortably under none of them. Gothic Metal bands, fronted by female singers whose

[1] Ross Robinson quoted in Tommy Udo, *Brave Nu World* (Santuary: London, 2002), p. 57-8.

dramatic, even operatic, vocal style is characteristic of the sub-genre, are more rare in the United States than in Northern Europe, although the band Evanescence stand out as one popular American example. What is also notable in this period with regard to American artists is the distinct lack of a strong female presence outwith isolated examples such as My Ruin, Evanescence and The Distillers, and there is certainly no grouping existent on a comparable scale to the Riot Grrrl movement which flourished at around the same time as Grunge. The Rock and Metal scene during this period is, in terms of artists, overwhelmingly male, Caucasian, and suburban in origin. In terms of the audience, the gender balance is a little more even, however it remains predominantly Caucasian and middle class.

The ten year period which this thesis covers is somewhat artificial in its endpoint, being that many of the artists upon whom I have chosen to focus are still recording and touring after 2004, however there are a couple of significant events in this year which make it a convenient date at which to curtain my focus. Both Marilyn Manson and Korn, key figures in my study, released 'best of' albums, *Lest We Forget* and *Greatest Hits Vol. 1* respectively. 2004 also saw the release of My Chemical Romance's *Three Cheers For Sweet Revenge*, their major label debut and breakthrough album, and with it, the growth and popularisation of Emo music and culture.

In Britain, the period 1994-2004 saw the increased visibility of a youth culture associated with Rock and Metal music who were labelled as 'Goths', although it was composed of a number different youth styles (such as skate-punk) as well as Goth. From my own experience working and participating in the live music scene in Glasgow during this period I have witnessed some important changes: the increased numbers of live performances open to the ages of fourteen and above, an increased emphasis upon crowd safety measures in part to deal with this vulnerable audience, and the diversification of provision of sites of socialisation for the audience, represented by an increase in the number and variety of club nights which cater to the adult audience of ages eighteen and

above. These changes in the industry represented the flourishing of a type of music which was dominated by North American artists, and what interests me most about the period are these artists and the work they produce.

I will be looking at the work of a few artists in detail: Korn, Slipknot, Tairrie B (of My Ruin and Tura Satana), Nine Inch Nails and Marilyn Manson. Each of these artists has had a high level of commercial and international success, has produced three or more albums during the course of their careers and at the time of writing are still involved in touring and producing new work. They do not represent every aspect of Metal nor are they intended to: rather they have been selected as some of the most recognisable artists in their field and as participants in the popularisation of Metal in the period of study. As mentioned above this period is largely dominated by male artists, and of those that I have chosen to focus on here only My Ruin and Tura Satana has a female lead, Tairrie B, a prominent female figure in American Metal music, albeit one whose work is not as well known as that of those other artists mentioned. The lack of a more significant female presence in terms of the artists of the period is unsurprising in an industry which remains heavily patriarchal, and in terms of the content of the work I intend to study the female figure may still be limited to the subject positions of virgin, mother, or whore. However, it should be noted that in comparison to earlier genres such as Heavy Metal, there is significantly less attention paid to overt displays of the objectification of women in the work I examine here, although there do remain examples of violent fantasy directed toward female figures.

The first of the artists whose work I shall look at in more detail is Korn, and their singer Jonathan Davis. Korn were formed in 1993 in Bakersfield, California and are closely associated with the invention of Nu-Metal. Jonathan Davis' voice is one of the most distinctive in the field, not only in terms of range but also for his use of what I describe as non-lyrical vocalisation, a combination of non-verbal vocal sounds which bears some likeness to the use of scat in jazz, but which is more likely to utilise vocal sounds

akin to a scream to convey anger, and which possesses a much more raw quality in terms of the expression of emotion. These particular sections often represent, within the context of the song, both confusion and the point where emotion passes the point of verbal articulation. It is not the only idiosyncrasy of their work - Davis plays the bagpipes (he has a Scottish grandmother) and the instrument features in some of their songs, and their live shows. Their lyrics purport to be highly autobiographical on Davis' part, and are written predominantly from a first-person perspective. The material itself is concerned with Davis' childhood, people who abused or taunted him, betrayed or used him and the band, sex and death – the latter of which is influenced by Davis' former employment as a coroner, for example in the song 'Pretty', from the album *Follow The Leader*, released in 1998, which concerns the death of an infant as a result of sexual abuse. Anger directed towards parental figures is also common, though this is often portrayed within an adult frame of reference, in which those words acquire a power of intimidation lacking in the figure of the child, and in which the child becomes threatening and aggressive. In 2005, original guitarist Brian 'Head' Welch left the band after converting to Christianity and has since spoken out against the content of the band's music and the message that he feels they convey.[2] To date Korn have released seven albums following their debut: *Life Is Peachy* (1996), *Follow The Leader* (1998), *Issues* (1999), *Untouchables* (2002), *Take A Look In The Mirror: Greatest Hits* (2003), *See You On The Other Side* (2005) and most recently *Untitled* (2007).

Another act closely associated with the Nu-Metal subgenre are Slipknot, who may also be called Rap-Metal or Rapcore, and who use elements such as samplers and turntables to a much greater extent than Korn. Formed in Des Moines, Iowa in 1995, there are nine members of the band, numbered 0-8, who are usually pictured in the popular media and in live performance wearing matching boiler suits and distinctive individual masks. The boiler suits all bear the serial number of their first release *Mate. Feed. Kill.*

[2] This is detailed in the recent book he published documenting his conversion: *Save Me From Myself: How I Found God, Quit Korn, Kicked Drugs, and Lived To Tell My Story*. (London: HarperCollins, 2007)

Repeat., released independently in 1996 and re-issued in 1997. The masks include a clown's mask, a gimp mask, a Japanese kabuki mask, a diver's helmet covered with large nails and a gas mask. These masks both hide their faces and act as having transformative qualities with relation to their performances. The band rarely appear in public or in interview without their masks, or with their face being somehow obscured. One notable exception to this is their DVD, *Voliminal: Inside The Nine*, released in 2006, which features each of the band members in interview. In many ways the band does not comprise individuals but characters, and they consciously play with the idea of the band as consumer product, reinforced by the use of the barcode number on the jumpsuits, for example. There have been various changes in personnel over the course of their career, however their distinctive sound has remained largely unaffected by this. Their live performance is particularly intense and sometimes violent, which is reported to result in numerous injuries for various band members:

> The two men [Sid Wilson and Shawn 'Clown' Crahan] will lock eyes across the stage, spontaneously leave their equipment and attack each other with real violence – a violence based, from what they both say in interviews, on mutual affection. Wilson said in 1999, 'It's up to the clown to intimidate me and keep me in line.'[3]

Slipknot's lyrics appropriate a rhetoric of destruction and opposition, presented as a positive force, couched in language that suggests purging, and externalising anger in a physical manner. This kind of cathartic approach is mirrored in their live performance – not only the violent on-stage activity already mentioned but also in the other extremes connected with their stage performance:

> One of the more legendary stories included the presence on stage of a large glass jar, which Corey would carry on with him and which exited a huge amount of curiosity. It contained a brownish, huddled lump which was unidentifiable even in close-up. Ultimately it was revealed that the strange matter was in fact the

[3] Joel McIver, *Slipknot Unmasked* (Omnibus Press: London, 2001), p. 50.

> decaying corpse of a crow – a *spiritual* crow, according to the band. Corey started opening the jar mid-show, sniffing deeply of its odour and vomiting into the crowd.[4]

This kind of action incorporates purging and disgust, an action dependant upon the presence of the audience to achieve its effects. The 'spiritual' nature of this purging is unclear, it is not linked to any spiritual belief in a religious sense, instead being linked to the ceremonial nature of such action as part of the performance. Disgust and the grotesque play an important role in their work: it should be noted that their moniker for their fans – 'maggots' – is not intended to be a derogatory term as such but reflects the theme of grotesque which is in evidence throughout much of their work. By placing it in the context of the live performance, the moral or social boundaries which produce the reaction of disgust to such an act are placed into question and rejected. In embracing this revulsion there is suggested a rejection of the fear of contamination, reflected by their description of both their music and their view of life in their lyrics in terms of the spread of disease. Their lyrics deal with anger and frustration, and parental relationships. Lead singer Corey Taylor grew up without his father, although as detailed in his interview on *Voliminal,* he was reunited with him relatively recently. There is, as with Korn, a great deal of anger shown toward parental figures, but with Slipknot there is a greater sense of revenge throughout their work, and their lyrics are much more aggressive in terms of their resistance to the forces that compete for control over the individual. Although they do also use first person narration there is with Slipknot the opportunity for other characters and voices to surface, one of which is the serial killer. This subject position is one that reflects the breakdown of the bounds of reason and morality, as well as the desire to possess and to obliterate the other. The obliteration of the other becomes here a way to cleanse or purge the individual of his own faults, by the transference of self-hate to another. Since their debut in 1995 Slipknot have released three albums, *Slipknot* (1999), *Iowa* (2001) and *Vol.*

[4] McIver (2001) p. 76.

3: The Subliminal Verses (2003). At the time of writing, a new album entitled *All Hope Is Gone* has just been released.

My Ruin are fronted by singer Tairrie B, one of the only prominent women in terms of North American artists during this period. Whilst the trend for female-fronted Gothic Metal bands such as Evanescence, and the European-based Nightwish, Within Temptation or Lacuna Coil emphasise the role of the Gothic heroine, Tairrie B's work inhabits a subject position which she describes as 'both feminine and masculine' ('Terror', *Speak and Destroy*), although as the articulation of a female subject willing to compete on an equal stage with her male contemporaries, rather than a statement of androgyny. Before forming My Ruin in 1999, she was the lead singer in Tura Satana (the band was originally called Manhole but were forced to change their name for legal reasons), who were active between 1993 and 1999. Previous to this she was a rap artist, and she continues to work on the spoken word side project The Lvrs. Her vocal style in her work with Tura Satana shows a clear influence from her hip-hop career, but she is also distinctive for her use of a vocal growl, a guttural scream that is usually more associated with male Metal and Hardcore singers. Her early work includes songs which deal with rape, abortion rights, and domestic violence, although she has said in interview that she does not consider herself a feminist, and disliked the Riot Grrl movement because she felt that they excluded men.[5] Her work with My Ruin, especially the album *The Horror Of Beauty*, released in 2003, deals explicitly with media expectations surrounding female body image, of which she is an outspoken critic. Her work is heavily influenced by religious imagery, and deals with betrayal, loss and anger. My Ruin are based in California, but have a noted following in Britain, and released a live studio compilation album *To Britain With Love…And Bruises* in 2001, which featured songs from their first two albums. Tura Satana's first album *All Is Not Well* (originally released under the name Manhole) was released in 1996, and produced by Ross Robinson. They released another album, *Relief Through Release* in 1997 before

[5] In interview with Rita Van Poorten, *Metal Maidens*, (March 1997) <http://www.metalmaidens.com/manhole.htm> accessed May 2008.

disbanding. My Ruin's debut album *Speak And Destroy* was released in 1999 in Britain and 2000 in America, and since then they have released four albums – *A Prayer Under Pressure of Violent Anguish* (2000), *The Horror of Beauty* (2003), *The Brutal Language* (2005) and *Throat Full Of Heart* (2008).

The next main act under discussion are Nine Inch Nails, and main singer and songwriter Trent Reznor. As the main songwriter it is in many ways Reznor's solo project, and has been since its inception in Cleveland, Ohio, around 1988. The first album, *Pretty Hate Machine* was released in 1989 and is a seminal album in terms of Industrial Metal, a subgenre which incorporates the use of electro elements such as samplers, synthesisers and drum machines. Of all the artists under discussion here Reznor has the longest career, consisting of six main albums and EPs and a number of other releases consisting of remixed versions of those releases: *Broken* (EP, 1992), *Fixed* (EP,1992), *The Downward Spiral* (1994), *The Fragile* (1999), *With Teeth* (2005) and *Year Zero* (2007). As well as a longstanding artist in his own right Reznor is closely associated with the emergence of Marilyn Manson, having produced his debut *Portrait Of An American Family*, released in 1994, before their relationship broke down during the recording of Manson's breakthrough album and defining career moment thus far *Antichrist Superstar*, released in 1996. Their feud was both public and acrimonious, and although there have been moments where a reconciliation may have seemed possible – such as Manson's appearance in the video for Nine Inch Nails 'Starfuckers Inc.' from the album *The Fragile*, itself curious, as the song is purported to be a rebuke in part to Manson – at the time of writing it remains largely unresolved. Those elements of teen angst which at times characterise the lyrics of Korn and Slipknot – and particularly those elements which relate to familial relationships – are absent from Reznor's work, concentrating instead largely upon the breakdown of the individual. There is also an element of political reference on *With Teeth* that is developed more fully on *Year Zero*, which deals explicitly with a post apocalyptic vision of America and in terms of concept and lyrical content marks a departure from his earlier work.

Lyrically, Reznor uses a vocabulary of purity and sin, and deals with issues of the individual's relationship to and betrayal by God as well as incorporating elements of the grotesque in an exploration of the relationship between man and the sacred. As with the other artists already mentioned, Reznor's work often deals with the self on the brink, or past the brink, of self-destruction. In this way they often deal with themes of oppression and conformity, and portray a self that is dominated and beaten down. In common with other Industrial metal acts, Nine Inch Nails' work also deals with aspects of posthumanity and the cyborg, using the machine as a metaphor for the experience of subjectivity and the numbness which tends to characterise his state of being.

Marilyn Manson is perhaps the most notorious of all the artists mentioned here, often the subject of intense disagreement amongst members of Alternative circles, and particularly those members of the Goth subculture, with which he is most commonly associated, but from which he is also commonly disavowed as a representative. He will be dealt with in much greater detail in the last chapter of this thesis, however he is an important contextualising figure and shall be mentioned throughout, so some description here is warranted. The name Marilyn Manson is also the name of the band, and his personality, as with Reznor's, is the most significant in terms of the act's public image. Manson's use of character and subjectivity is based at least in his early work around the development of distinct images for each phase of his work, not unlike David Bowie (an acknowledged influence) or Madonna, however Manson attempts to go so far with that characterisation as to obliterate any sense of separation from those characters. This highly performative approach to subjectivity exceeds character, and it is in this respect that I shall use theories of the spectacular and the hyperreal to explore his work. The name Marilyn Manson is a combination of Marilyn Monroe and Charles Manson – a union of the glamorous and the violent, a famous woman and a serial killer, a pattern which is repeated in the names of some of the other band members. Musically, the line up of Manson's band is similar to that of Nine Inch Nails, but in terms of song structure tends more often toward

a more traditional verse / chorus arrangement. Since his first album, *Portrait of an American Family*, released in 1994, his work has been concerned with a critique of the ideological underpinnings of American society and the American dream. Since that album he has released an additional seven main albums and EPs: *Smells Like Children* (1995), *Antichrist Superstar* (1996), *Mechanical Animals* (1998), *Holy Wood* (2000), *The Golden Age of Grotesque* (2003), *Lest We Forget: The Best Of* (2004), and most recently *Eat Me, Drink Me*, in 2007. In addition the remix EP *Remix and Repent* was released in 1997, and live album *The Last Tour on Earth*, in 1999.

The Contemporary Gothic Subject

In the first chapter I shall set out my figure of the contemporary gothic subject, drawing on recent theories of the contemporary gothic, their relation to older more established modes of gothic, and its applicability to the work of various artists working in this time period. I shall also examine in more detail the work of those main artists I have studied and shall be basing the work in the following chapters upon. Central to this chapter is the notion that the development of subjectivity within the contemporary gothic is reliant upon the experience of trauma, and that this has much sympathy with certain recurrent thematic concerns visible in the work of the artists with which I have engaged. I shall relate this contemporary gothic subject specifically to the American context and take note of the particularly national implications therein.

The popular musician as star or celebrity is a complex and sometimes contradictory site of the production of meaning, and drawing on theories of stardom I began to develop an interest in the approach to subjectivity that was displayed by such figures. It is my belief that these figures represent and enact certain modes of being within a given cultural context, and that a construct may be extrapolated from an analysis of these figures, which can then be used to investigate various aspects of that context. It has always been my intention to examine these figures in alignment with other cultural practices common to Metal, and which reflect back on the production of the subject as existing within this

framework. Two areas which were of great interest to me with regard to identity formation and the experience of self were body modification and crowd activity at gigs, which I shall go on to look at in more detail in later chapters. This thesis is then concerned with the production of identity within an aesthetic that relies heavily on notions of process and performance. The resurgence of interest in the gothic and the development of the contemporary gothic as a response to specific cultural and social influences seemed critical in developing a model of the subject such that could be used to investigate the politics of identity and identity production within the work of those artists I have described. What I will argue over the course of this study is that there is a discernable approach to subjectivity in these texts which participates in the contemporary gothic. This approach will be embodied by the establishment of a construct, the contemporary gothic subject, a figure which can be used as a tool to interrogate certain recurrent aspects of Popular Metal music and culture which pertain to subject formation. For the most part, although I use work done in the area of subcultural theory as a key reference point, my study shall utilise semiotic and textual analysis as well as a theory of discourse derived from the work of Michel Foucault in order to study the subject as it is constituted through language and image rather than subcultural identification. Of the current debates within popular music studies, textual analysis has become less and less popular, and although there have been some key texts concerned with redressing this balance, these are mostly concerned with the formation of a musicological analysis appropriate for popular music, as I shall go on to discuss.

Within cultural studies as a whole, textual analysis has also been subject to scrutiny, in the work of Nick Couldry[6] and Graeme Turner[7] for example. Key criticisms of lyrical analysis, such as that by Simon Frith[8] have also contributed to this fall from grace. Clearly then, my choice of approach requires some clarification. The use of discourse

[6] Nick Couldry, *Inside Culture: Re-Imagining the Method of Cultural Studies* (London: Sage, 2000)
[7] Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, 3rd edn (London: Routledge, 1990)
[8] Simon Frith, *Music For Pleasure: Essays in the Sociology of Pop* (Oxford: Polity, 1988)

theory in relation to popular music texts has a precedent in the work of Robert Walser[9] and David Brackett.[10] Walser uses discourse theory in his study of Heavy Metal to allow him 'to pursue an integrated investigation of musical and social aspects of popular music.'[11] For Brackett, the use of discourse analysis allows him to situate the song in its social and historical context, and move away from a limiting analysis of the work as isolated from these contexts. Both of these approaches however are at least partially based on the problem of the musicological approach to popular music, which is outside of the scope of this thesis, interested as I am in the presentation of the self through language and the more visual and aesthetic elements of performance. Some musicological approaches to popular music have reflected back upon the analytical approach to western music in an attempt to broaden the scope of musicological analysis as a whole and to create a 'new musicology' of pop. Notable examples of the success of this enterprise include work done by Allan F. Moore,[12] Richard Middleton,[13] Sheila Whiteley,[14] and more recently, Stan Hawkins.[15] Musicological approaches have been most successful when integrated with other types of theory – as is the case with Robert Walser's *Running With The Devil*, in which he utilises musicological approaches for specific ends in validating the musical ability of the Heavy Metal musician through a discussion of the Heavy Metal virtuoso. Musicological analysis has been brought to bear upon artists for whom their image but not their music has dominated discussion, such as Stan Hawkins' discussion of Madonna in *Settling The Pop Score*. In much the same way that Walser and Brackett were aware of the problems of musicological analysis, I am keenly aware of the problems of lyrical analysis as potentially limiting, and thus follow their model in applying a theory of discourse to the texts at hand.

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[9] Robert Walser, *Running With The Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1993)
[10] David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)
[11] Walser, p. 28.
[12] Allan F. Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text. Developing a Musicology of Rock* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993)
[13] Richard Middleton, 'Popular music Analysis and Musicology: Bridging the Gap', *Popular Music*, 12 (1993), 177-190.
[14] Sheila Whiteley, *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 2000)
[15] Stan Hawkins, *Settling The Pop Score: Pop Texts and Identity Politics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002)

My approach here is also informed by an awareness of and emphasis upon the confessional nature of many of the song texts I have studied. These texts are marked by their investment in the first person, and a desire to reveal the private persona, a desire which is linked to notions of honesty, sincerity, and ultimately authenticity in their presentation of self. It is this which primarily substantiates my continued interest in lyrics and defence of lyrical analysis as one resource amongst many for use in the investigation of this field.

Although a great deal of work has been done on youth music culture in the area of subcultural theory, which has produced a wealth of highly useful concepts and terminology, its association with notions of resistance to hegemony as developed by the Birmingham CCCS,[16] and typified by Dick Hebdige's important work *Subculture: The Meaning Of Style*[17] were not sufficient to engage with this music and culture. Although appropriating the rhetoric of resistance and although ideas of resistance have aesthetic and ideological purchase within Rock and Metal music and culture these are not embedded within the same social and cultural relationships as was the Punk phenomenon. Indeed, the model of subculture-as-resistance developed by the CCCS and used by Hebdige is, as he acknowledged in *Hiding In The Light: On Images and Things*,[18] as much a part of its time as the object of study, and some theorists have been explicit in distancing their work from such notions of resistance, such as Sarah Thornton in her work on club cultures.[19] Work done on the everyday use of popular music such as that by Christina Williams[20] has opened up discussion concerning the complexity of individual's use of, and identification with, musical forms. This work has suggested that the level of subcultural identification for any one participant is difficult to gauge and that to do so risks assuming an equivalence of interest for all participants. Previous works on Rock and Metal cultures and subcultures have focussed upon the explication and illumination of a particular sector of the field, such

[16] For example, Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson eds., *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 1976)
[17] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979)
[18] Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things* (London: Routledge, 1988)
[19] Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995)
[20] Christina Williams, 'Does It Really Matter? Young People and Popular Music', *Popular Music*, 21:2 (2001), 223-242.

as Deena Weinstein's *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture*,[21] or Paul Hodkinson's *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture*.[22] However, whilst their approaches are both valuable and illuminating, the culture which I encountered is so fractured as to render this kind of approach unsuitable.

In examining lyrics as a primary source of information it must be made clear what it is that is apprehended during such analysis. By examining the figure of the Rock Star, or more accurately, the Popular Metal Star, I hope to illuminate the mode of being in contemporary society which they represent and reflect. This approach is drawn from a synthesis of Richard Dyer's theorisation of film stars and Simon Frith's theorisation of the role of the voice in the performance of popular music. Dyer's landmark work *Stars*[23] and *Heavenly Bodies*[24] utilised a semiotic approach to the study of film stars to suggest that they be read as texts within the social and cultural contexts in which they appear. Central to his discussion are two propositions: that 'stars are images in media texts',[25] and that they articulate

> what it is to be a human being in contemporary society: that is, they express the particular notion we hold of the person, of the 'individual'. They do so complexly, variously – they are not straightforward affirmations of individualism. On the contrary, they articulate both the promise and the difficulty that the notion of individuality presents for all of us who live by it.[26]

The first of these statements is important to this thesis because it acknowledges the textual nature of the appearance of figures in the mass media, and in doing so opens a space for the textual analysis of such figures. The second is important because it suggests a manner in which the audience may invest in the figure of the celebrity, and also because it offers us a way to view stars as paradigmatic examples of the subject in a given social, cultural and

[21] Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture*, rev. edn (New York: DeCapo, 2000)
[22] Paul Hodkinson, *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture* (Oxford: Berg, 2002)
[23] Richard Dyer, *Stars*, rev. edn (London: BFI Publishing, 1979)
[24] Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1986)
[25] Dyer, *Stars*, p. 10.
[26] Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies*, p. 8.

mediatised context. Central to what I shall argue here is the notion that the star-as-text may have representational qualities regarding an approach to subjectivity in contemporary society. Drawing on Elizabeth Burns' work on the theatricality of everyday life, *Theatricality: A Study of Convention in the Theatre and in Social Life*,[27] Dyer suggests that an increase in the public awareness of the performativity of everyday life leads to an anxiety concerning the validity of any separation between public and private selves. As such, the performative aspect of the star and its importance in articulating or representing society's notions of the individual becomes heightened. He defines a 'star image' as consisting of 'what we normally refer to as his or her "image", made up of screen roles and obviously stage-managed public appearances, and also of images of the manufacture of that 'image' and of the real person who is the site or occasion of it'.[28] In applying Dyer's theorisation of the significance of the film star to figures within popular music this sense of performance is key, given the level of investment in first-person authenticity in the field of Rock and Metal music. Simon Frith suggests in *Performing Rites* that the act of performance itself affects the way the audience hears the vocal personality, and that 'performance is not as self-revealing as it may seem'.[29] Emphasising the dramatic aspects of the popular song, he argues that singers of popular music are similar to film stars in two respects. Firstly, that they are involved in 'a process of *double enactment*: they enact both a star personality (their image) and a song personality, the role that each lyric requires, and the pop star's art is to keep both acts in play at once.' Secondly, that the singer is 'the site of desire – as a body, and as a person…singers are continually registering their presence.' In looking at both these frameworks it is acknowledged that a great deal of what we apprehend of the star is mediatised. The biggest contrast between the two however is the comparative level of fictionality that we may attribute to film star playing a role, and a Metal star singing a song. For the latter, the genre conventions of Rock music – as

[27] Elizabeth Burns, *Theatricality: A Study of Convention in the Theatre and in Social Life* (London: Longman, 1972)
[28] Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies*, p. 7-8.
[29] Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 212.

opposed to pop – mean that it is expected that the singer reveal something of his or her private self through the song narrative, a level of revelation not expected from the film star, for example. This is an important contrast, and highlights what I, following Frith's identification of levels of performance, would argue to be the three levels of identity that we apprehend in a star. These are the narrative persona, the 'I' that occurs at a lyrical level; the media personality, the mediatised image of the individual; and the private self. The last of these is perhaps the most difficult to quantify, as it is associated with a sense of 'private life' which has in recent years increasingly become subject to media scrutiny, and thus increasingly passes into the realm of the media personality as it is created and disseminated through the popular media. The distance between these three levels varies depending upon artist and genre convention. One of the reasons why Marilyn Manson presents such an interesting example of subjectivity during this period of Metal music is the attempt to merge the three levels of identity in his star persona. He does not use his real name, Brian Warner, identifying totally with the moniker 'Marilyn Manson', and certainly during his career to date the narrative and media personas have been very closely allied. A number of critics – including Richard Dyer, Su Holmes and Sean Redmond[30] and Joshua Gamson[31] – have commented upon the fan's search for the private self which lies behind the media personality, where the private self is considered more 'real' or 'authentic' in contrast to the 'manufactured' mediatised personality. There is a parallel here with the reception of Metal musicians, where a high value is placed upon the honesty or sincerity of an artist in conveying their emotions through their work, both by fans and by the artists themselves. One of the ways that artists display this is in the use of confessional modes of song where the narrative persona is identified with the private self, and the content of the song is purported to be a true story. However, from the point of view of the audience, and in the context of live performance, the sincerity attributed to such a song is potentially

[30] Su Holmes and Sean Redmond eds., *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture* (London: Routledge, 2006)
[31] Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994)

disrupted by the fact of its repetition (on successive dates of an international tour, for example), and this leads us to an important point made by Frith, that '"sincerity"…cannot be measured by searching for what lies *behind* the performance; if we are moved by a performer we are moved by what we *immediately* hear and see.'[32] Frith suggests that 'over-the-top' artists such as Prince, Shirley Bassey, or Mick Jagger, as camp idols, have 'grasped the camp point that the truth of a feeling is an aesthetic truth, not a moral one; it can only be judged formally, as a matter of gestural grace.' His argument here suggests a certain futility in the search for the private self, certainly in the case of live performance, however, it is an integral part of the fan's process of listening and identification, just as live performance retains importance in terms of the accumulation of subcultural capital.

Notions of the value of 'sincerity', 'truth' or 'authenticity' in popular music require some clarification. Different forms of Rock music, including Popular Metal, have long established their difference from Pop on the grounds of such values, on the basis that they have meaning which is absent from Pop due to the latter's involvement in the industry as product over art form. These claims of seriousness and value were influenced by the involvement with early Rock music with the 1960s counterculture, and the discourse of authenticity emanating from music critics in the 1970s. The modern western music industry has become a global phenomenon with regard to sales, distribution and touring. That said, such global influence is marked by the dominance of a small number of large record companies and a range of artists who are primarily either British or American. The modern music industry has grown in strength since the birth of youth culture during the twentieth century, and has at its centre a crucial tension between art and commerce, artistic integrity and business. In many ways these are seen to be mutually disruptive, that commerce can be seen to be antithetical to artistic integrity.[33] For Rock or Metal music in particular, and especially where it is defined by its opposition to Pop, idealised and

[32] Frith, *Performing Rites*, p. 215.
[33] This sense of pollution is particularly heightened with regard to folk music, as discussed by John Connell and Chris Gibson in *Sound Tracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place*. (London: Routledge, 2003)

romanticised notions of authenticity are crucial to the production and retention of subcultural capital. However, it has been argued by both Roy Shuker[34] and Simon Frith[35] that this opposition is largely invalid, and that Rock's participation in the industry is little different from that of Pop. Frith argues that in the terms of Rock criticism, to see the industrialisation of the music industry as compromising the 'truth' of music is to falsely assume that music is the starting point and not the end product of the industrial process. It is an empty distinction, as popular music and commerce have co-existed since the inception of that which we would recognise as the modern music industry. Thus the distinction falsely bestows upon Rock and Metal a degree of artistic integrity seen to be absent from Pop music on the basis of industrial organisation and production. If indeed this is the case then any claim for the worth of Rock or Metal music on the grounds of its prioritisation of artistic integrity over commercial value will necessarily fall into difficulty, because they are as much a part of the industrialised production of music as is Pop. However we should not ignore that Rock and Metal do, in Lawrence Grossberg's terms, produce meaning for its fans and that meaning is bound up with ideas of authenticity. He argues that Rock must 'move from one centre to another, transforming what had been authentic into the inauthentic, in order to constantly project its claim to authenticity. For it is this claim [to authenticity] which enables Rock to matter, to make a difference, to empower its fans.'[36] What is crucial here is the persistence of the discursive function of authenticity despite the changes in its construction, and also Grossberg's assertion that Rock's purpose is one of empowerment for its consumers. I would argue that there has been a shift in the perception of commodification during the period of study in question here, with, for example, the growth in sponsorship of various sections of the industry, and the continuing controversy concerning file sharing and illegal downloading. Whilst even the word 'authenticity' has fallen somewhat out of fashion within popular music studies,

[34] Roy Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1994) p. 8.
[35] Frith, *Performing Rites*, p. 12.
[36] Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of this Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 209.

the values associated with 'sincerity' or 'truth' still have a great deal of currency. In his article 'Authenticity as Authentication',[37] Alan Moore suggests that there are three authenticities which articulate related assumptions about truth or essence with regard to the Rock song: 'that artists speak the truth of their own situation; that they speak the truth of the situation of (absent) others; and that they speak the truth of their own culture, thereby representing (present) others.'[38] Each of these authenticities is concerned with truth, a communication based on the sincerity of the artist and the assumption that this truth will represent or relate to the truth of the (absent and present) others' experience. Moore brings together the terms authentic, real, honest, truthful, with integrity, actual, genuine, essential, and sincere, using the first of these as a byword for the field of meaning which these indicate largely on the basis that it is the first which is most recognisable from the academic study of popular music. What this grouping does is to illustrate that the interpretation of authenticity which is in action within discourses surrounding popular music is allied with that which has a value not necessarily linked to the provenance of the artefact, but the intention or agency of the subject encountering it. Moore's tri-partite typology of authenticity 'depending on who, rather than what, is being authenticated', which he offers on the basis that the dismissal of authenticity as a tool with which to assess popular music is premature, indicates that popular music authenticity is always authenticity for someone: it performs value that is relative in human socio-cultural terms. Rock and Metal thrive on a sense of otherness or difference, a state of alterity capable of self-expression and communication. However, it is inextricably bound to the culture of commodity in which context it appears, for it exists only in and through material disseminated in mass form. In this way, as David Brackett and others suggest, it participates in the romantic ideology 'so necessary to the production and consumption of art under capitalism.'[39] That is, that the artistic integrity of the work be seen to transcend

[37] Allan Moore, 'Authenticity as Authentication', *Popular Music*, 21:2 (2002), 209-223
[38] Moore, 'Authenticity as Authentication', p. 209.
[39] Brackett, p. 88. See also Jon Stratton, 'Capitalism and Romantic Ideology in the Record Business,' *Popular Music 3: Producers and Markets*, ed. by Richard Middleton and David Horn (Cambridge:

its status as a commodity, even where that status may be more visible than in previous years. The distinction between Rock (or Metal) and Pop is, as Roy Shuker points out, a legacy of a mythology of Rock which began in the 1960s, 'when leading American critics – Landau, Marsh, and Christgau – elaborated a view of Rock as correlated with authenticity, creativity and a particular political moment: the 1960s protest movement and the counterculture.'[40] What persists of this correlation is the binary opposition of real / fake, authentic / inauthentic, Rock and Metal / Pop, artistic integrity / commodity within Rock and Metal music and ideology, retaining a sense of difference or otherness, and it is generally agreed that although these oppositions are largely invalid, they continue to have significance from an ideological point of view.[41] In the works of the artists of the period under discussion here, we find a comparable concern with 'the real' and 'the fake' embedded within their lyrics. There are two strands to this usage, firstly, in terms of using 'fake' as an insult, to denote a lack of sincerity, as seen in the My Ruin song 'Sycophant' from *Speak And Destroy*: 'and all you do is take steal and imitate / you are what you create / you're fake'**,** and in terms of a search or desire for a stable lived experience of subjectivity. For example, Nine Inch Nails 'Wish' from *Broken*: 'Wish there was something real wish there was something true / Wish there was something real in this world full of you'[42] or Korn's 'Blind', from *Korn*: 'Deeper and deeper and deeper as I journey to / Live a life that seems to be a lost reality / That I can never find a way to reach' or 'Got the Life' from *Follow The Leader*: 'So give me something that is for real', all of which posit the real as something lost, or perhaps more accurately, that state of being which is unavailable.

This notion of unavailability of the real is connected to the professed disbelief in the future for the subject, the erosion of the future as a symbolic construct. One of the

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Cambridge University Press, 1983), 143-56 and Aaron Fox, 'The Jukebox of History: Narratives of Loss and Desire in the Discourse of Country Music,' *Popular Music*, 11:1 (1992), 53-72.

[40] Shuker, p. 8.

[41] Frith, *Performing Rites*; Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text*; Shuker, and Brian Longhurst, *Popular Music and Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995)

[42] Although this song is from an EP released in 1992, outwith the strict period of study, it remains a mainstay for live performances and thus has been included here.

overarching themes of what Karen Bettez Halnon calls 'Fuck the Mainstream Music', or FTMM, is that the future, as a symbolic construction, has been destroyed by the negligence of the parent generation.[43] This is particularly prevalent in the work of Marilyn Manson, for example, but is evident in the work of many artists, the repetition of images of broken homes, abusive parents and damaged children representative of the dis-location of the child in the inheritance of the family: literally, that the child, rejecting the values of the parent, cannot envisage a place for him or her (but more often than not, him) self in the adult world. Rebellion or resistance, far from being a spur to political action, is formed as resistance to participation, that is, that the rebelliousness which we encounter is characterised by apathy and nihilism. Referring specifically to artists such as Limp Bizkit, Kid Rock, Slipknot, Eminem and Marilyn Manson as 'exemplary of the most transgressive, controversial and popular white male bands in the American music mainstream'[44] she points to a formation of youth that does not lead a countercultural life, and which builds identity from alienation without seeking to change the determinant factors of that from which it is alienated, which resists incorporation but which also denies the possibilities of its own future. Halnon criticises this depoliticisation, believing that it is a distraction from the possibilities of real social change, and that the spectacular resistance that is displayed by bands such as Limp Bizkit and Marilyn Manson serves only to neuter the power of youth. I would suggest that this spectacular resistance expresses the abject loss of agency inherent in this experience of subjectivity, and for which a lack of stability is represented by the symbolic destruction of the future. A significant proportion of songs at hand deal with notions of personal crisis and issues of identity. The narrative persona is consistently presented as being at a point of crisis: whether in terms of mental or psychic breakdown, as being affected by past or present trauma, or questioning their own identity and sense of self. The sense of crisis that pervades these songs is intensely personal, and

[43] Karen Bettez Halnon, 'Alienation Incorporated: "Fuck the Mainstream Music" in the Mainstream', *Current Sociology*, 53:3 (May 1995), 441-464.
[44] Halnon, p. 46.

focuses often on issues of mental health, self-harm and occasionally suicide. Variously this manifests as an uncertainty concerning the future, disillusionment and alienation or disaffection, a desire for self-transformation, expressions of pain or numbness and a desire to feel, a feeling of betrayal by parents or the parent generation, and a longing for certainty or clarity, expressed as a desire for authenticity where this is framed as something 'real', or the desire to establish a community of feeling with others, which can be seen in repeated reference to 'them' and 'us' in many songs. This sense of crisis of subjectivity does not correspond easily to any one particular socio-economic crisis affecting the group to which this music appeals (primarily middle class and Caucasian) or the artists themselves. Indeed, as Halnon stresses, this period of music is marked for its general lack of overt politicisation,[45] and despite some interaction with ideological notions of America, particularly in the work of Manson, more direct comment is absent until the end of the period of study and the years that follow it, for example, in Nine Inch Nails album *Year Zero*, which deals with a post-apocalyptic vision of America and is heavily critical of George W. Bush. The only other exception to this in the period of study is the work of Tura Satana which as I have mentioned deals in some songs directly with issues of women's rights, and of economic hardship and urban violence.

The Role of the Body

I shall then turn to the role of the body for the contemporary gothic subject, through an examination of the themes of pain and violence such that they pertain to the contemporary gothic subject and its sense of crisis. Contextualising this figure in specific cultural practices associated with Popular Metal and Alternative culture I shall examine the areas of body modification and crowd activity at live performances. I will suggest that the body acts as a site of verification in subject formation.

[45] There are some exceptions, such as Armenian-American band System of a Down.

The sense of crisis and desire for 'the real' identified above are paired with a concentration upon the bodily, whereby the physical lends solidity to the uncertain and to that which pertains to the mind and is thus to a degree intangible. There is a wide range of literature which can be brought to bear on the discussion of the body in relation to this kind of popular music and the subjectivity expressed therein, reflecting the intersubjective nature of the study of popular music and the culture which surrounds it. From this body of literature I have chosen to focus on those aspects which emphasise the role of the body in identity formation. The work of Bryan Turner[46] and Chris Shilling[47] is of particular importance here, particularly Shilling's theorisation of the 'body project', which I shall go on to discuss.

There are three areas in which the sociological study of the body is especially developed: issues of gender and sexuality, issues of health and medical discourses, and issues of representation and social relations. The work of Michel Foucault, particularly *The History of Sexuality*, in addition to Maurice Merlau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* are of primary importance in terms of general influence in the analysis of the body. A seminal text of this new sociology of the body was Bryan Turner's *Body and Society*,[48] responding to what he saw as a lack of study on the body as a site of meaning. The centrality of the body to the production of the subject's sense of identity is represented by what Turner calls 'somatic society', a phrase used to describe how the body exists as 'the principal field of political and cultural activity'[49] in contemporary society. Turner sought to unearth a hidden history of the body, and drawing on Foucault's theorisation of biopower and biopolitics, foreground the human body as a social construct produced 'in order to be controlled, identified and reproduced.'[50] The turning point in this social construction of the body is identified by Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* as to occur in

[46] Bryan Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*, 2nd edn (London: Sage, 1984), and *Regulating Bodies: Essays in Medical Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1992)
[47] Chris Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 1993), and *The Body in Culture, Technology and Society* (London: Sage, 2005)
[48] Turner, *The Body and Society*, p. 63.
[49] Turner, *Regulating Bodies*, p.162.
[50] Turner, *The Body and Society*, p. 63.

the seventeenth century, where power over life, rather than death, became dominant. This power took two forms, the power over the body of the individual, as represented by the increasing importance of disciplines such as medical knowledge, and the second, power over the population. Foucault characterises these as the 'disciplines of the body' (anatomo-politics) and the 'regulations of the population'[51] (biopolitics). (The beginning of this era of biopower is seen by Foucault to be instrumental in the development of capitalism, which he argues would have been impossible without 'the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes.'[52]) Since then, in western capitalism, we understand our bodies in a biomedical framework provided to us by medical experts, and we understand our subjectivity as being part of the experience of a population. Thus the body of the individual and the body of the public are described, evaluated and controlled accordingly. Crucially, this kind of power does not appear as power in an oppressive sense, rather as that which enables us to understand our existence – a productive model of power. This technology of power is similar in many respects to that offered to us by the discourses of health and safety which have become so prominent in recent years in an increasing number of domains, and which has lead some commentators to discern a culture of fear,[53] whereby we accept control over life as a means to preserve life, the social and political ideal of freedom taking on an Orwellian inversion in this context.

For example, we may look at the increase of the state's control in curtailing of individual liberties in response to international terrorism. This control over the body of the population purports to prize the safety of that body, at the expense of the liberty of the individual bodies which make up that population, but which is presented as justifiable in light of the risk which is said to threaten the latter. One may argue that international

[51] Michael Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol 1: The Will to Knowledge*, trans. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1976) p. 139.
[52] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 141.
[53] Such as Frank Furedi, *Culture of Fear: Risk-Taking and the Morality of Low Expectation.* (London: Cassell, 1997). With regard to international terrorism, commentators such as Wole Soyinka, *Climate of Fear* (London: Profile, 2004) have identified the manner in which the body of the individual becomes subject to suspicion and fear, in the name of freedom.

terrorism is produced as a global risk, in the manner in which Ulrich Beck described in *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*,[54] not only as a risk specific to modernity, but also as a fallacy – a creation of the state in order to control the population.

In contrast to the biological fixity of the body represented by the vast medical knowledge of the body (and the unprecedented means to control it) available in contemporary society, there are available a vast array of socio-historical categorisations of the body. We are presented with a multiplicity of bodies: the consumer body, the disabled body, the female body, the body of the child – all of which position this categorisation of the body as crucial to the development of subjectivity. Mary Evans points to the increasing complexity at the beginning of the twenty-first century of the question of the status of the body now that we have come to understand it. Using the example of feminism and in particular the work of Judith Butler and Susan Bordo, she argues that our understanding of our bodies moves away from biological fixity and into the uncertainty of the culturally and historically formed entity.[55] Evans' purpose in the collection of essays that make up that particular work is to illuminate the different ways in which the certainty-reality of the body is questioned in such a context. Michael Feher, in the introduction to *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, (a work Turner uses as an exemplar of the quality of modern scholarship on the body[56]) argues that the body is a modern locale of authenticity, describing an obsession with the body in critical study as a search for values in the face of a social reality in which the self and the body are uncertain principles, where we have moved away from traditional conceptions of the body and the body's relationship to the self. He cites an epidemic fed by carnal desires, a dissociation of procreation and sexuality, and a confusion between human and machine.[57]

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[54] Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society Towards a New Modernity*, trans. by Mark Ritter (London: Sage Publications, 1992)
[55] Mary Evans and Ellie Lee eds., *Real Bodies: A Sociological Introduction* (Hampshire: Palgrove, 2002)
[56] Bryan Turner, preface to Pasi Falk, *The Consuming Body* (London: Sage, 1994) p. viii.
[57] Michael Feher with Ramona Naddaff and Nadia Tazi eds., *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* (New York: Urzone, 1989) p. 12.

Chris Shilling puts forward the idea of the 'body project' as one way in which we can begin to understand our bodies within modernity. Shilling observes that at a time when we have unprecedented control of our bodies, we are simultaneously more doubtful of what that body is, and how this control should be exercised.[58] The 'body project' is a concept which, he argues, represents a tendency within modern western society to link the individual's sense of self-identity with the presentation of the body. In this sense the body is 'an entity which is in the process of becoming'[59], to which work must be applied, and which work which is differentiated from traditional or tribal society's marking or modification of the body in that it defines not a communal understanding or social acceptability of the body through ritual, but that of the individuated self, the reflexive self. Consumer society responds to these body projects through the provision for social anxiety through the products it offers – slimming and cosmetic aids, for example. Drawing on Foucault's theory of biopower, Shilling argues that these methods are methods of control, 'less by brute force, as in traditional societies, and more by surveillance and stimulation.'[60] This power by surveillance and stimulation masquerades as free choice and as such becomes naturalised. The idea of the body project, as an ongoing process in which self-identity is linked to the presentation of the body, but which presentation is facilitated by consumer society, raises issues of control which are especially pertinent here.

In a similar vein, work on the modification of the body which explores the body as canvas or art project are particularly useful, for example, the work of Mike Featherstone,[61] Victoria Pitts,[62] and Paul Sweetman,[63] in exploring the tattoo's relation to fashion, and the ideological divide between modification and mutilation, and understanding issues of ownership and control concerning the body of the subject. Christian Klesse and James

[58] Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory*, p. 3.
[59] Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory*, p. 4.
[60] Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory*, p. 67.
[61] Mike Feathersone, Mike Hepworth and Bryan S. Turner eds., *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 1991)
[62] Victoria Pitts, 'Body Modification, Self-Mutilation and Agency in Media Accounts of a Subculture', *Body and Society*, 5:2-3 (1999), 291-303. and *In The Flesh: The Cultural Politics of Body Modification* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003)
[63] Paul Sweetman, 'Anchoring the (Postmodern) Self? Body Modification, Fashion and Identity.' *Body & Society*, 5:2-3 (1999), 51-76.

Myers[64] have discussed the motivation of some body modifiers, a group called the Modern Primitives, in relation to a perceived lack of communal rites in western society, for which the authentication of the subject through body modification represents a ceremonial engagement in those activities that resembles a modern rite of passage. They argue that a loss of faith in the progress of civilisation has produced a feeling of alienation, in response to which the subject is variously engaged in the search for 'authenticity'. Whereas the tribal appearance of body modification is associated with initiation rites and ceremonial value, this neo-tribalism does not entail compulsory modification, and is undertaken and experienced largely on an individual rather than communal level. Paul Sweetman argues that tattoos and piercings can be viewed as 'body projects', 'as attempts to construct and maintain a coherent and viable sense of self-identity through attention to the body.'[65] In such an attempt, it is the materiality of the body which enables this stability, and this stability is the primary determinant of authenticity. Sweetman argues that despite the popularity of the imagery of body modification, actual tattoos and piercings (the two examples upon which he concentrates) cannot be divorced from their means of production, and that the permanence or semi-permanence of body modification is in contrast to the transitory nature of fashion, and as such has been characterised as anti-fashion.[66] However, as Sweetman points out, although the mark itself may be permanent (or semi permanent), such permanence does not apply to external referents, which also determine the meaning of such marks. Whether we are to understand body marking as a form of neo-tribalism or as a form of modern fashion, what is evident is that the body is used as a tool to explore and define subjectivity. As Mike Featherstone suggests, consumer culture

[64] Christian Klesse and James Myers, '"Modern Primitivism": Non-Mainstream Body Modification and Racialized Representation', *Body & Society*, 5:2-3 (1999), 15-38.
[65] Sweetman, p. 53.
[66] Ted Polhemus and Lynn Procter, *Fashion and Anti-Fashion: Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978) and Ted Polhemus, *Streetstyle: From Sidewalk to Catwalk* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994)

charges the body with 'new identity functions' reinforcing the notion 'that the body is a vehicle of pleasure and self-expression.'[67]

The Grotesque and the Gothic Monster

The third chapter focuses upon the experience of the subject as one of monstrosity, drawing on theories of horror and the grotesque to suggest that the contemporary gothic subject can be profitably read in frameworks suggested by the study of the monster in gothic and horror texts. Working on the basis that the contemporary gothic subject exists in a world which can be characterised as grotesque, I explore the notion that he or she experiences a confusion between self and other. I shall argue that Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection can also be used to understand the monster and the use of the grotesque in Popular Metal, with reference to self-harm and the recurrence of a thematic concern with mental health issues and the instability of the self.

To understand the significance of the grotesque as a characterisation of the self in this context it is first important to briefly survey the development of the term as it is used to apply to art and literature, and also of its connection to the contemporary gothic. The root of the term is 'grotte', from the cave or grotto in which particular decorations were discovered during Roman excavations in the sixteenth century. The style, which combined both human and animal elements, was imitated throughout the sixteenth century in art and architecture, and is characterised by the unusual combination of the realistic and fantastic. This combination, which refutes normal organisational categories, is fundamental to positioning the grotesque as that which challenges accepted boundaries, and embraces incongruity. Although the term and that to which it is applied has undergone some development, there are certain recurrent features relating to its application. Philip Thompson argues that the term 'does not have a constant meaning, but we may distinguish

[67] Mike Featherstone, 'The Body in Consumer Culture', in Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth and Bryan S. Turner eds *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 1991), pp 170-96, (p. 170.)

certain recurring notions about it.'[68] There are a number of ways in which to interpret it: it is an umbrella term variously embracing disharmony, the comic and the terrifying, extravagance and exaggeration, abnormality, radicality in substance and presentation, the absurd, the bizarre, the macabre, caricature, parody, satire, irony, aggressiveness and alienation, playfulness, paradox and contradiction, disorder, hyperbolism, negation, ridicule, burlesque, subversion, monstrousness, mutation, fear and terror, the overthrowing of convention, strangeness, ugliness, repulsion and fascination, carnival and the uncanny.[69] Wolfgang Kayser, in his important work on the grotesque, identifies three historical periods in which what he describes as the 'power of darkness' or 'ominous powers' were felt and which are reflected in the use of the grotesque: these are the sixteenth century, the period from Sturm und Drang to Romanticism, and the twentieth century. Furthermore, in these periods, he argues, the certainties of a previous age were washed away and the appearance of the grotesque in art and literature was a response to this sense of uncertainty.[70] This view has much sympathy with the notion of the appearance of the gothic at times of excess and uncertainty. By invoking this association I wish to suggest that the contemporary gothic subject, as a part of this recurrence, can be positioned as responding to social anxiety and a sense of excess.

Related to this 'excess' is one of Kayser's most interesting points concerning the usage of the grotesque, namely that it can be seen as an attempt to subdue the 'demonic' aspects of the world.[71] That is, to embody and control those aspects which can be seen to threaten the normal order. The intersection of the gothic and the grotesque in the nineteenth century is particularly interesting in this respect, as the gothic often shows a

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[68] Philip Thompson, *The Grotesque* (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 20.
[69] This list has been garnered from a survey of a few important texts on the history and usage of the grotesque: Geoffrey Galt Harpham's *On The Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), Wolfgang Kayser's seminal *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* trans. by Ulrich Weisstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), Arthur Clayborough's *The Grotesque in English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), Michael J. Meyer ed. *Literature and the Grotesque* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995) and Mary Russo's *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
[70] Kayser, p. 188.
[71] Kayser, p. 188.

strong thread of conservatism, a nostalgia or reification of the normal order, through the use of distortion. Indeed, Arthur Clayborough argues that the associations of the grotesque with distortion first appear in the Romantic usage of the term, through its association with the gothic.[72] The banishment of the gothic monster represents the re-established order as a resolution of anxiety, with the grotesque functioning as a critique of the real, for the grotesque must always contain the real within itself. The fear experienced in reaction to the grotesque is the fear of our own potential to transform into that grotesque being; it is the fear that the delineation between self and other is much less stable than we may have imagined. This apprehension of the instability of self is also met within Kayser's work with regard to the experience of madness, which he calls 'one of the basic experiences of the grotesque which life forces upon us.'[73] We may apprehend this in the repeated reference within contemporary American Popular Metal to madness, insanity or mental instability.

The echo of the normal found within the grotesque is also the subject of the links between the grotesque and physical abnormality. Mary Russo, drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's work on Rabelais, maintains that all her categories of the grotesque rely heavily on the trope of the body, going so far as to say that her interest in the grotesque is based upon its status as a bodily category.[74] In particular, she examines the correlation between the female body and the grotesque, in the sense that the female body has historically been associated with the monstrous and the liminal. For Russo, the normalisation of the male body means that the female body is always produced as deviant.[75] This kind of production of deviance is particularly noticeable in the work of Tura Satana and My Ruin, as we shall see. Bakhtin posits that the grotesque body is 'a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another

[72] Clayborough, p. 14.
[73] Kayser, p. 184.
[74] Russo, p.viii.
[75] Russo, p. 11-12.

body.'[76] For Bakhtin, the boundary between one body and another is central to the grotesque. Those elements of the lower bodily stratum, for example the phallus and the bowels, those excretions and emissions which are often the subject of disgust, are a critical part of understanding how we conceive of our own bodies. In addition, 'the events of the grotesque sphere are always developed on the boundary dividing one body from the other and, as it were, at their points of intersection.'[77] Thus, as Julia Kristeva would later argue with regard to abjection, we give birth to ourselves in those moments of excretion, of vomit, of tears. Our selves are realised at that point where the divide between one body and another are brought into focus. By the same token, our selves are challenged when we are presented with that boundary.

Throughout these various characterisations of the grotesque, one element remains constant, and it is that of its ambivalent or ambiguous nature. The ambivalence experienced with regard to the grotesque is the central theme for this section. It is this ambivalence that motivates us to both laugh and be disgusted, to be drawn to and repelled by the same object or experience. Bakhtin clearly states that to ignore the 'deep ambivalence of the grotesque'[78] is a fundamental mistake. This deep ambivalence locks in the reaction of the audience – and indeed the notion of performance – as being crucial to the grotesque. Kayser maintains that the grotesque is created only through its reception, that no object is or is not grotesque but that we make it so by our own reaction; that it is possible to experience something as grotesque despite a structural lack of evidence to support that belief.[79] Kayser's vehemence on this point is, I believe, motivated by the desire to convey the sense that the grotesque cannot or should not be used to impose a moral judgement. He makes the point explicit, that the grotesque is not concerned solely

[76] Bakhtin, p. 317.
[77] Bakhtin, p. 322. It should also be noted that Bakhtin maintains that the grotesque body has a correlation with the ancestral body, for death brings nothing to an end, as it shall be renewed by the next generation. This theme of the ancestral body has resonance with the primordial or universal body of the alchemists, from which all things in the universe emanate and to which all things wish to return, and to which Marilyn Manson makes reference in much of his work, particularly *Antichrist Superstar* and *Holy Wood*, and which may have a correlation to the 'character' of ADAM which is a recurrent reference in these albums, and to a lesser extent, *Mechanical Animals.*
[78] Bakhtin, p. 304.
[79] Kayser, p. 181.

with 'individual actions or the destruction of the moral order… It is primarily the expression of our failure to orient ourselves in the physical universe.'[80] While Clayborough also maintains that the grotesque cannot be characterised solely with regard to rejection, and that curiosity should also play a part in analysing the grotesque,[81] he believes Kayser's definition to be subjective and unreliable.[82] While Kayser emphasises the reaction of the audience, Clayborough asserts that the intention of the artist should be taken into account. Clayborough's definition of the grotesque and categorisation of different types of art relies on a psychoanalytic approach, involving the degree to which the conscious mind of the artist is affected by the subconscious. I retain some suspicion of his assessment of Kayser's work and of his own theory relating to the interaction of the conscious and subconscious mind, primarily because I doubt the usefulness of this approach with regard to the value of the intention of the artist in the assessment of the worth of a work of art. Furthermore, Kayser's analysis of the world of the grotesque is much more illuminating with regard to the experience of the grotesque, which is itself much closer to my own work:

> The grotesque world is – and is not – our own world. The ambiguous way in which we are affected by it results from our awareness that the familiar and apparently harmonious world is alienated under the impact of abysmal forces, which break it up and shatter its coherence.[83]

Kayser's invocation of the notion of alienation may be seen to have parallels with the alienation of the contemporary gothic subject from the 'normal' world, and its usefulness as a means to investigate the contemporary gothic subject can be seen with the manner in which it concerns the loosening of boundaries between the self and other.

This can be further contextualised by Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection. Based upon psychoanalytic foundations, Kristeva's theory critiques both the notion of a secure

[80] Kayser, p. 185.
[81] Clayborough, p. 72.
[82] Clayborough, p. 64-5.
[83] Kayser, p. 37.

self and clear lines between the conscious and unconscious. I will draw upon this theory here in order to examine the way that the grotesque and the monstrous are concerned with the liminal and the boundary between self and other. There is much in Kristeva's work on abjection that addresses the notion of subjectivity as a process, and the notion of the grotesque body. The particular work addressed here is *Powers of Horror*, published in 1982. The abject, meaning literally that which is cast off or cast away, is used here by Kristeva to describe that which is neither subject nor object, that which exists on the boundary between the two. In defining the theory of the abject as pertaining to this subject / object relationship she takes her lead from the work of Georges Bataille,[84] whom she describes as the first to make the link between abjection and the inability to perform the act of exclusion with enough strength. Her development of the theory of the abject is in part a critique of Freudian notions of the assertion of the self as the firm boundary between the conscious and the unconscious, maintaining instead that the self is not as secure as this Freudian formulation would suggest, indeed that subjectivity is never secure. Within the terms of the Freudian theory of repression, it is suggested that the process of repression remains incomplete:

> The 'unconscious' contents remain here *excluded* but in strange fashion: not radically enough to allow for a secure differentiation between subject and object, and yet clearly enough for a defensive *position* to be established – one that implies a refusal but also a sublimating elaboration.[85]

Thus the relationship between self and other, inside and outside, can be examined. This idea of subjectivity as a process has some sympathy with Chris Shilling's theory of the body project, that is, the self that is always in a process of becoming. Kristeva also explains that the process of subjectivity can be observed in bodily functions, with reference to the 'clean and proper body', the *corps propre*. That is, not the level of hygiene or

[84] In particular, 'L'Abjection et les Formes Misérables' in *Essais de Sociologie, Œuvres Completes.* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970) 2: 217 which she references in Chapter Three, 'From Filth to Defilement'.
[85] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) p. 7.

cleanliness of the body, but the process of disgust or repulsion that we feel when confronted by food which we loathe, or the presence of the corpse. The example she provides is that of the 'gagging' feeling she experiences when faced with the skin that forms on warm milk, with reference also to the rejection of the parent who offers it to her. While the parental relationship is of only passing interest here, what is crucial is the manner in which she describes the drama of the self at this point of crisis: 'During that course in which "I" become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit.'[86] The example of the corpse is similarly illuminating:

> …refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border.[87]

The corpse, as the 'utmost of abjection' serves to bring into sharp focus our presence as living beings, by making active the border between the living and the dead. What causes abjection then is not 'lack of cleanliness or health…but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.'[88] The process by which we reject the waste from our own body, and feel disgust, is that which makes stronger our subjectivity, our defensive position. While this would seem to be purely negation and rejection, it is to be remembered that there is here a loosening of certainties, the abject is that through which boundaries are destabilised. While the abject may release that which threatens to overwhelm us, it also offers us freedom from those laws or boundaries. It is thus that the ambiguity we feel in reaction to the horror genre, for example, is made clear. We have returned here then to the theory of the grotesque, and its ambivalence or ambiguity. In the threat of the destabilisation of boundaries we are both thrilled and terrified. The intensity of the abject is nauseating, but

[86] Kristeva, p. 3.
[87] Kristeva, p. 3.
[88] Kristeva, p. 4.

to embrace it is thrilling. To engage with the abject is to simultaneously realise both the terror and the fascination of the loosening of boundaries. Kristeva's work must, of course, be contextualised with regard to its status as revisionist psychoanalysis, and based upon the development of the pre-Oedipal child, the influence of which she sees as extending into adult life. We could also perhaps posit that Kristeva's work in this respect participates in a particular kind of *fin-de-siècle* anxiety concerning the distinction between self and other and the negotiation of materiality.[89] It is my intention in presenting such context to indicate an underlying assumption of this work that the contemporary gothic subject can be seen to be in crisis with regard to the distinction between self and other, that is, in a particular context concerning monstrosity.

The Figure of the Child

The fourth chapter concentrates on the figure of the child as central to the development of the contemporary gothic subject, and draws on the tradition of the child as monster in gothic and horror texts as a context for the appearance of the figure of the Vengeful child, as it is used to critique the parent generation and embody notions of revenge. I will suggest that the identification with the child figure is used to explore a feeling of lost innocence and in the case of male artists, a vulnerability consistent with a discursive crisis of masculinity. I shall also argue that the figure of the child is highly symbolic, highlighting an anxiety concerning the future as an ideological construct, including a feeling of blame toward the parent generation.

There is a recurrent duality to the figure of the child which is key to my analysis here. In this respect I am to a certain degree writing against the social constructionist paradigm established by Philippe Ariès in the 1960s, with the publication of his work *Centuries of Childhood*,[90] which has been tremendously influential in the development of social theory concerning the child. Since the publication of Ariès' book, it has become a

[89] See for example Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the* fin de siècle. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. 11.
[90] Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*. trans. from the French by Robert Baldick. (London: Cape, 1962)

staple of socio-cultural work on the child to assert childhood as a socially constructed concept. Ariès' study of French social history led to his assertion that while there have always been children, childhood, as a distinct period within the lifecycle during which persons are afforded special rights or are seen to require special protection due to their vulnerability, is an ostensibly modern concept that emerged at roughly the end of the seventeenth century. It has, since its publication, started what Neil Postman calls 'the rush' on analysis concerning the child, a great deal of which concerns an alleged crisis of childhood.[91] Primarily, these works address the threat to what Jo Bridgeman calls 'common sense understandings' of what childhood entails,[92] that is, a sense of innocence coupled with nostalgia. However, various theorists have argued for the recognition of a dual conception of the child as either innocent or sinful throughout history, particularly within the Christian tradition,[93] and it is this view that I shall take up here, with reference to the significance of figure of the child in the American cultural context. The dual conception of childhood, as both victim and threat, is explored by Harry Hendrick as part of a trio of dualisms (victim/threat, mind/body, normal/abnormal) that help to 'encapsulate children in an entity of investment that treats them as constituting "the future".'[94] This same bifurcated view of childhood can be observed in early American Evangelical Puritan child-rearing manuals, as explored by Philip Greven. Greven's exploration of various texts pertaining to child rearing reveal a view of children within the evangelical Puritan

[91] Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood*. 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage, 1982) p. 5. These works include Michael G. Wyness, *Contesting Childhood* (London: Falmer, 2000), Phil Scraton, *Childhood In Crisis* (London: Routledge, 1997), Pam Foley, Jeremy Roche and Stanley Tucker eds., *Children In Society: Contemporary Theory, Policy and Practice*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave in association with the Open University, 2001), Valerie Suransky, *The Erosion of Childhood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), David Elkind, *The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1981), Marie Winn, *Children Without Childhood: Growing Up Too Fast in the World of Sex and Drugs.* (New York: Penguin, 1983), Lionel Rose, *The Erosion of Childhood: Child Oppression in Britain 1860 – 1918*. (London: Routledge, 1991), Joseph L. Zornado, *Inventing The Child: Culture, Ideology, and the Story of Childhood* (New York: Garland, 2001), Allison James and Adrian L. James, *Constructing Childhood: Theory, Policy and Social Practice*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004),

[92] Jo Bridgeman, 'The Child's Body', in Mary Evans and Ellie Lee eds., *Real Bodies: A Sociological Introduction.* (New York: Palgrave, 2002) pp. 96-114.

[93] See, for example, Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*. (London: Routledge, 1990), and David Grylls, *Guardians and Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth Century Literature*. (London: Faber & Faber, 1978)

[94] Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debates*. Revised edition.. (Bristol: Policy Press, 1994)

community that vacillated between angel and fiend, organised around the need to instil self-control in the child. The infant, not able to exercise self-denial or self-control, reiterated human nature as both depraved and sinful, and this observation influenced attitudes toward the human body: bodily functions such as defecation and urination, over which the infant had no control, being a daily reminder of the 'inner corruption of human nature.'[95] As Elizabeth N. Goodenough stresses, Calvanist notions of infant damnation were discarded during the first half of the nineteenth century as 'Romantic ideas about the child's divine innocence permeated transcendentalist thought, educational reforms, the Sunday School movement, the growth of paediatrics, and the spawning of a new secular literature for and about children' and 'gentler discipline was advocated in the child-rearing manuals…which proliferated after 1830'[96] however, these notions of the dual nature of childhood were taken up by such writers as Nathaniel Hawthorne and integrated into the American gothic tradition; most famously perhaps in his presentation of the child Pearl in *The Scarlet Letter.* Thus there is, within the American cultural context, an existent tradition of the child as potential threat upon which the contemporary gothic draws.

There is an additional figuration of the child which has significance here. Sheila Whiteley's *Too Much Too Young* explores both child stars and the place of childhood and gender in popular music, and suggests two particular figures: the little girl and the little boy, as tools for investigation.[97] The former she associates with such figures as Tori Amos, Björk and Kate Bush, with reference to the 'vulnerability of femininity as performance',[98] the latter with boy bands such as Take That or The Monkees. Referencing the appearance of children in horror film, Whiteley centres on the transgressive potential of the child figure, as both innocent and knowing: an 'uneasy relationship' which informs 'the

[95] Philip Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Childrearing, Religious Experience and the Self in Early America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977) p. 66.
[96] Elizabeth N. Goodenough 'Hawthorne and Women: Engendering and Expanding the Hawthorne Tradition' in *Hawthorne, Woolf and The Child: "Demons of Wickedness, Angels of Delight"* ed. John L. Idol Jr. and Melinda m. Ponder (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999) p226 – 236, p. 228.
[97] Sheila Whiteley *Too Much Too Young: Popular Music, Age and Gender*. (London: Routledge, 2005)
[98] Whiteley, *Too Much Too Young,* p. 121.

tension surrounding the erotic potential of the young body.'[99] The video for Britney Spears' 'Baby One More Time', in which she appears variously dressed as a schoolgirl and in her underwear in her bedroom, is a particular example of the result of this uncomfortable relationship between innocence and the promise of sex which circulates in the sexualisation of young bodies around the 'barely legal' teen or the Lolita figure. The politics of desire and attraction which inform the figure of the 'little girl' are inscribed and fought across the female body. The figure of the 'little boy', which Whiteley describes as having 'had to take on the generic conventions imposed by a fifty year heritage'[100] is most clearly represented by the boy band or by the participants of *Pop Idol*, exist in contrast and opposition to the tradition of aggressive Rock men, cock rockers, as explored by Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, for example.[101] The figure of the child that we encounter in the work of the artists I will explore here negotiates the ideological terrain of what Whiteley calls the three As – Abuse, Abjection and Alienation,[102] and certainly in the work of Korn, I would suggest that vulnerability is expressed through identification with a figure similar to that of the 'little girl', and can be seen to participate in a discursive crisis of heteronormative masculinity

Marilyn Manson

The final chapter of my thesis is dedicated to the work of Marilyn Manson, perhaps the most prominent artist of the period and a fascinating figure whose fame, or rather notoriety, extends beyond the scope of the audience for his music to a much greater extent than any other artist of this period. This chapter forms a case study of sorts, building on the work that is done throughout the thesis, and as a result the chapter follows a slightly different structure than those which precede it. His work shall be examined as a key example of contemporary gothic subjectivity in terms of the model I will present, utilising

[99] Whiteley, *Too Much Too Young*, p. 24.
[100] Whiteley, *Too Much Too Young*, p. 124.
[101] Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, 'Rock and Sexuality' in Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin eds., *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word.* (London: Routledge, 1990.)
[102] Whiteley, *Too Much Too Young*, p. 67.

the analytical conclusions of the chapters which form the main part of the thesis. Of particular interest here is his use of named entities or narrative personae which come to define his star persona, each of which draws on diverse source material, which I shall explore, and which conflate the three levels of star identity previously discussed. In this respect his work shows a departure from the work of his contemporaries in terms of the presentation of self, and which shows a clear debt to theories of performance art and the idea of the artist-as-artwork, as well as some parallels with such artists as David Bowie. In this chapter, as well as exploring the construction of those named entities through his use of symbolism, I shall examine his work with regard to theories of the spectacular and the hyperreal.

Chapter One

The Subject and the Contemporary Gothic

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the contemporary gothic subject as a construct, a figure which will be used throughout this thesis as a tool to investigate various aspects of American Popular Metal music and culture during the period of study. Against a backdrop of the proliferation of the gothic as a mode in popular culture, the narrative personas of various American Popular Metal artists during this period offer articulations of individuality in contemporary society which can be seen to participate in the traditions of the gothic, and more specifically the American and contemporary gothics, insofar as the latter has gained academic popularity in recent years, notably in the work of such theorists as Catherine Spooner,[1] Alexandra Warwick,[2] and Steven Bruhm.[3] My interest in using the contemporary gothic as a context for these artists lies primarily in the role that the past, and painful or traumatic experience plays in subject formation, and the manner in which the gothic deals with social anxieties through the monstrous and the grotesque, in addition to the relationship that these kinds of artists have with the Goth subculture and its variants. With relation to the Goth subculture, I shall explore the reasons for the misapplication of this term to other Alternative cultural groupings, which shall open up the discussion of the popularity of the gothic within contemporary popular culture. Having located the gothic contexts in which the work of these artists may be placed, I shall then investigate in greater detail the narrative personae in their work as representatives of this contemporary gothic subjectivity. Furthermore, I shall introduce themes and concepts which will be explored in later chapters, and theoretical approaches which inform this study as a whole. As was explored in the Introduction, the use of textual analysis based upon lyrical sources is part of a cumulative approach to this music and its surrounding culture which incorporates

[1] Catherine Spooner, *Contemporary Gothic* (London: Reaktion, 2006)
[2] Alexandra Warwick, 'Feeling Gothicky?' *Gothic Studies*, 9:1 (2007), 5-15.
[3] Steven Bruhm, 'The Contemporary Gothic: Why We Need It', *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jeremy G. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp.259-276, and 'Nightmare on Sesame Street: or, The Self-Possessed Child', *Gothic Studies* 8:2 (2006), 98-113.

cultural practices and aesthetics in addition to the study of lyrics, which are used with the understanding that they enable the explication of the artist-as-subject and subject-in-performance, rather than to be taken to represent the totality of meaning produced by popular music.

Gothic, Goth Subculture and Adjectival Codes

When discussing the gothic in popular culture and particularly in popular music, it is necessary for reasons of clarity to differentiate between what is meant by gothic as a prevalent mode in evidence in popular culture, and the Goth subculture such that has been documented in great detail by such theorists as Paul Hodkinson. My intention in doing so is not to provide a distinction which excludes one from the other – such an approach would be disingenuous – but simply to make clear that in talking about the gothic, I am not merely approaching the Goth. Indeed it is my intention to indicate the adaptability of the gothic under different circumstances. It is also the case that one may observe the widespread misapplication of 'Goth' by the mainstream media to refer to other cultural groupings who would not identify as such, the fluctuation of these different groupings under the blanket term 'Alternative culture', and the resistance to the mainstreaming of the term from within the Goth subculture, which is defined as that subculture still currently active which originated in the British post-punk movement of the 1980s. For example, Marilyn Manson, although often described in the mainstream media as a 'Goth-rocker' is noted by Joshua Gunn to be a figure whom participants in the Goth subculture do not accept as a Goth.[4] Interviews with members of the Goth subculture in Nancy Kilpatrick's *The Goth Bible* reveal a division of opinion on the artist.[5] He is a defining example of how gothic influence can be recognised in a wider context despite the divorce from the bounds of the subculture. This is due to a certain extent to the commercial success he has

[4] Joshua Gunn, 'Marilyn Manson is not Goth: Memorial Struggle and the Rhetoric of Subcultural Identity', *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 23:4 (October 1999), 408-431.
[5] Nancy Kilpatrick, *The Goth Bible: A Compendium for the Darkly Inclined* (London: Plexus, 2005) p. 8, 88-90.

achieved, which is in conflict with aspects of exclusivity important to the Goth subculture. The label 'Alternative' which I have employed is somewhat problematic itself, having undergone significant change since its first use in the mid 1990s to denote a specific type of American college Rock music, to a marketing label, to a generic term for scenes, lifestyles or subcultures (including Goth) associated with Rock and Metal music, which is the sense in which I use it throughout this study. The use of 'gothic' throughout this study then should be understood to be distinct from any reference to the Goth subculture, although the latter is clearly linked to the former, and the subculture is part of Alternative culture.

The concepts of scene, lifestyle and subculture have each been assessed in detail by various theorists, with differing implications as to their usefulness. As an analytical device, subculture is made less useful by its ties to notions of class and resistance, as explored by Andy Bennett in his work on lifestyle,[6] where he argues for an understanding of identity as constructed, rather than given, as is implied by much subcultural work done by the CCCS. Notions of scene, as explored by Sarah Cohen in her work on Rock culture in Liverpool, are useful particularly for examining the production and consumption of music in a specific locale.[7] It is perhaps with Bennett's work that my own finds most resonance, with regard to the manner in which identity may be approached as a creative process. To this I would add the usage that Anthony Giddens employed in *Modernity and Self-Identity* to refer to a set of choices made by the individual in order to create a sense of self-identity in the conditions of high or late modernity where other, more traditional means of creating that sense, that narrative, have been discredited or have decayed.[8] Whilst this view of the uncertainty of the self in high modernity is arguable, it seems particularly applicable to the contemporary gothic subject for whom the institutions of

[6] Andy Bennett, 'Subcultures or Neo-tribes? Rethinking the Relationship Between Youth, Style and Musical Taste', Sociology 33 (1999), 599 – 617, and *Popular Music and Youth Culture: Music, Identity & Place* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000)
[7] Sarah Cohen, *Rock Culture In Liverpool: Popular Music In The Making* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991)
[8] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991)

church, family, and state, for example, are felt to be in decline in terms of providing certainty, and where the subject is consistently portrayed as being at a time of crisis. The choices embodying a lifestyle form the framework within which the subject discerns their individuality. In this sense lifestyle is performative. That is, to borrow Judith Butler's rhetoric, that lifestyle performs an identity for which there is no original. While Butler's use of performativity referred to gender, I believe that it can be usefully applied here. Inherent in the most strident adherence to any particular lifestyle in terms of choice is the attempt to find a sense of worth or truth: however these do not tally with any original, given, set of values, rather they are constructed as being so. Participation in a particular lifestyle may enamour the participant with a sense of authenticity, however that authenticity has no original but that participation makes it so. This can be further illustrated by reference to Erving Goffman's very literal interpretation of the performance of the self in everyday life. He distinguishes between the honest, sincere performance and the false performance. The latter is divided into that which is to be taken 'unseriously', such as a theatrical performance, or that which is intended to deceive, as with the confidence trickster. The honest performance, in contrast, is the successful performance of an individual in everyday life. These models of behaviour which Goffman asserts are, in our Anglo-American context, that upon which we base our conceptions of behaviour.[9] In this formation sincerity is identified with reality, and it is the lack of consciousness of the artificiality of the performance which is the key. Goffman adds that 'we all act better than we know how.'[10] He is careful to distinguish between a staged theatrical performance – for that is an authentic performance in so far as we engage to be deceived, we consent to the suspension of reality (insofar as that is the nature of the performance). He dispenses with the idea of 'character', preferring 'role' or 'part', and discards 'script' in a similar fashion – we do not rehearse our lines but rather they come to us through a thorough

[9] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin. 1990) pp. 76-7. First published (Doubleday: Mayflower, 1959)
[10] Goffman, p. 80.

understanding of our role – and our understanding becomes naturalised. There is an important point to be made here concerning the connection between the self-consciousness of performance and authenticity. Goffman's formation maintains that all life is a performance, in which social (and indeed moral) worth is ascribed to sincerity. I am keen to stress the importance of the relationship between performance and authenticity in order that their relationship not be understood as one of diametric opposition.

My use of the term 'Alternative' also has some reference to the notion of 'scene': in referring to the Alternative scene in a city I refer to a collection of social events and groupings which incorporates Rock, Metal, Industrial, Cyber, Punk, Skate, Goth and Hardcore, for example, all of which are often forced together by limited sites of socialisation. Not all of these musical styles will be associated with a distinct culture as has been distinguished with regard to Goth, however this social limitation significantly influences the coalescence of these groups under one umbrella term and wider social perception. In the same way that 'Alternative' has developed into an adjective so gothic can be used to indicate not membership of the Goth subculture but a general concern with the 'dark and grim',[11] a phrase Kilpatrick uses in describe Goth not just as a subculture, but as an attitude. This concern with darkness is significant in that it demonstrates the influence of a descriptive field in which the transgressive pertains to darkness, as shadow in relation to the light of the normal or mainstream world, where one may self-identify as abnormal.

Despite what I have characterised as the misapplication of the term 'Goth' to parts of Alternative culture, it does in my view reflect the popularity of the gothic within popular culture as a whole, and particularly, the appearance of recognisably gothic features in parts of Alternative culture. To further illustrate this I turn to the notion of genre. It is my contention that the gothic does not cohere as a genre in itself but functions as a mode, whose influence can be felt across various types of media and cultural objects. Both

[11] Kilpatrick, p. 1.

Kilpatrick and Hodkinson have associated Goth subculture with the descriptive labels of darkness, the grim, and the sombre. Joshua Gunn also notes a concern with these terms in his theory of shared adjectival codes in genres. In his examination of the adjectival codes present in Goth subculture, he finds that when respondents are asked to explain why they like Goth music, the dominant adjective used was 'darkness'. He argues that 'musical genres are fundamentally assemblages of preferred adjectival codes',[12] where these are defined as descriptive terms which indicate a shared assumption about the content and concerns of that which they describe. This is particularly relevant for the discussion of music, as it has a tendency to fall into figurative language, particularly in non-academic and non-musicological fan discourse. These codes are produced in relation to the culture as a whole, and in this way, allow us to approach the text of musically-based cultures using discourse theory as both Robert Walser and David Brackett have done in their studies of popular music. Walser, drawing on Tzvetan Todorov's analysis of genre and discourse (which itself draws on Mikhail Bakhtin's work on speech genres), argues that musical genres 'arise from metadiscursive discourse.'[13] This formation of genre functions to create a 'horizon of expectation' on the part of the fan, and a standard for the composer. Gunn describes the idea of genre as being produced as a way of listening:

> the metadiscourse of fans, artists, and critics, the practices of description and explanation come to function as discriminatory signifying practices that intrude on the physiological process of hearing… The value of a particular musical work as a generic representative is thus determined by the degree to which it is heard with appropriate generic filters, that is, the appropriate and previously determined adjectives.[14]

In this way, shared adjectival codes, as well as producing a way of hearing, reveal a metadiscourse which can be used to understand the culture which surrounds the music.

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[12] Joshua Gunn, 'Gothic Music and the Inevitability of Genre' in *Popular Music and Society* 23:1 (1999), 31-50 (p. 31.)
[13] Walser, p. 29.
[14] Gunn, 'Gothic Music', p. 35.

For both fans and the popular media, the presence of shared adjectival codes allows the categorisation of more commercial acts such as Nine Inch Nails and Marilyn Manson as 'Goth'.

American and Contemporary Gothic as Context

The theories of both American gothic and the contemporary gothic provide a context in which to read the work of American Popular Metal musicians during the period of study, which I shall outline here. The contemporary gothic is of primary interest in this respect, however there are elements of the American gothic which are also important to consider. First of these is the relationship that the subject has to history: both personal history and that of the nation. The relation with the past is associated with a deeply national concern with the ability to self-govern, and a synergistic relationship with the ideal of the American Dream. David Punter describes American gothic as a 'refraction' of English gothic: 'where English Gothic has a direct past to deal with, American has a level interposed between present and past', a concern with obsession and pathologised guilt, in which the legacy of Puritanism plays a key role.[15] Early American gothic as characterised by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charles Brockden Brown and Edgar Allen Poe drew on elements of the European tradition of gothic literature in Romanticism and transplanted it into a new geography. The changes that are made in this transposition help toward the understanding of the development of the gothic in American popular culture, and also the manner in which gothic exceeds and evades genre. The gothic images in the European model were not necessarily suited to the new geography, but there were new shadows in place of the old, and there remained gothic questions, gothic themes, which were addressed in their new location and culture. Fred Botting describes this change of emphasis as concerned with self-government: 'gothic psychology and the questions narratives raise of the reality of strange incidents are framed with different issues: of rationalism, democracy and

[15] David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day, Volume I: The Gothic Tradition*, (London: Longman, 1996) p. 165.

religious organisation, and their relationship to individual freedom and social control.'[16] This emphasis is in part what differentiates American gothic from the tradition developed in Britain and the rest of Europe: the everyday replaces the supernatural, however gothic is still a mode in which to challenge the boundaries of reality. Familiar aspects of the literary gothic persist: transgression, excess, the threat of a loss of self-control and images of decay, sickness and infection, although they are framed within a national context in which the gothic represents the dark side of a national myth. Eric Savoy argues that the American gothic and American Dream bear a key relationship to each other: that they 'actually interfuse and interact with each other.'[17] Despite the break away from the old European tradition in the self-awareness of itself as a new country, American gothic displays a concern or negotiation with the past, producing it as a site of anxiety within American fiction – in early American gothic, for example, one might look at the weight of secrets in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, or Charles Brockden Brown's *Weiland*. The gothic of Hawthorne uses New England and the New England Puritans to locate national identity: Savoy argues that Hawthorne 'located a distinct national subject' originating from the colonial past, which offered to the gothic 'a national way of reconstructing history that arose from a homegrown verbal tradition and a strong engagement with the idea of "America."'[18] In this way, the history of the subject and the history of the country are drawn together.

There is also apparent in American gothic an anxiety concerning the supposed benefits of social progress, reflected both in the recurrence of apocalyptic terms,[19] and in the tradition of the grotesque, exemplified by later writers such as Flannery O'Connor. The use of the grotesque draws attention to the object of horror or disgust, but it is also disruption at the level of the ideological power of everyday life. This is also seen in the

[16] Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996) p. 114.
[17] Eric Savoy, 'The Rise of American Gothic', *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp. 167 – 188. (p. 167.)
[18] Savoy in Hogle ed., p. 176.
[19] For a history of apocalyptic thinking in America see Robert C. Fuller's *Naming the Antichrist: The History of an American Obsession* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995)

new American gothic writing by authors such as James Purdy, Joyce Carol Oates, John Hawks and, as mentioned above, Flannery O'Connor, which concentrate geographically on the American South. Botting describes this writing as a 'literature of psychic grotesquerie' that deals in

> landscapes of the mind, settings which are distorted by the pressure of the principle characters' psychological obsessions. We are given little or no access to an 'objective' world; instead we are immersed in the psyche of the protagonist, often through sophisticated use of first-person narrative.[20]

There are similarities here to the American Popular Metal song, especially with regard to the use of first person narrative. With regard to the lack of an objective world it is notable that Savoy links the American gothic to a distinctly national struggle with the Lacanian Real: that which lies outwith the bounds of language and which resists symbolisation, but which the American gothic strains to convey.[21] In this way he characterises American gothic as being locked in a struggle to discover the actualities of a monstrous past. As I shall go on to discuss, the discovery of the subject's past is also a key facet of subject formation in the contemporary gothic.

The American gothic is also concerned with the family, as a key formation in American ideology, the values of which are often evoked to represent the a central component of American life. Corruption of, or threat to, the family unit is often utilised in popular cultural texts in order to articulate other perceived cultural threats to social cohesion, as explored by Steven Bruhm in his study of the child in American horror film.[22] The child and the family will be explored in a later chapter of this thesis, however at this point I will point to such films as *The Shining* and *The Exorcist* as concerned with threats to the family and the family unit which reflect a fear of ideological corruption. The family also constitutes the key unit of more recent popular cultural texts involved with the gothic,

[20] Botting, p. 114.
[21] Savoy in Hogle ed. (2002) p. 169.
[22] Bruhm, 'Nightmare on Sesame Street.'

such as *Six Feet Under*, a television series set in a family-run funeral home. This concentration on the family both participates in and reflects an anxiety concerning inheritance, both national and ideological, which I shall discuss in more detail in Chapter Four. For now however I feel that it is important to note the ideological power of the family unit within American ideology, in order to highlight the importance of the disruption or criticism of said unit in the song texts which I have studied.

Moving on to the theory of the contemporary gothic, it should be noted that academic interest in this area has increased in recent years, the appearance of the journal *Gothic Studies* being particularly significant in this respect. Catherine Spooner[23] points to the publication of Ken Gelder's *Reading the Vampire* in 1994, Mark Edmundson's *Nightmare on Main Street: Angels, Sadomasochism and the Culture of the Gothic* in 1997, and Christoph Grunenberg's edited collection *Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Late Twentieth Century Art*, also in 1997 as evidence for the relatively recent nature of this development. Within popular culture this resurgence of interest is mirrored in the proliferation of gothic themes and images in film, television and popular music, and gothic narratives can be observed in texts not associated with a traditionally gothic aesthetic. What defines the gothic becomes more problematic as its influence expands: in fact what seems characteristic is its adaptability, confirming that it is, as Alexandra Warwick describes, a mode rather than a genre. Fred Botting characterises the recurrence of gothic anxiety throughout cultural history as a 'diffusion of gothic traces among a multiplicity of different genres and media.'[24] Gothic arises as a manner of dealing with social, cultural and political anxiety. It also appears as a thematic concern, in imagery and in setting. The gothic staples of eighteenth century British literature of '[t]ortuous, fragmented narratives relating mysterious incidents, horrible images and life-threatening pursuits… Spectres, monsters, demons, corpses, skeletons, evil aristocrats, monks and nuns, fainting heroines

[23] Catherine Spooner, 'Introduction: Gothic In Contemporary Popular Culture', *Gothic Studies*, 9:1 (2007), 1-4

[24] Botting, p. 13.

and bandits'[25] that Botting describes have provided us with a wealth of images and narrative possibilities associated with the gothic. Attempts to characterise the mode have also focused on the effect intended upon the reader: predominantly that of fear or threat, for which the Freudian notion of the uncanny – itself derived from German gothic texts – has been extensively utilised. Also notable is the idea of the return of the repressed, another notion derived from Freudian psychoanalysis, sometimes reduced to a simplistic theme in which the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. Although the popularisation of psychoanalytic theory in contemporary society should not be dismissed in terms of a popular analysis of the gothic, the application of such theory to literature should be handled with caution: a factor acknowledged by Freud in his theorisation of the uncanny.[26] Judith Halberstam has argued that psychoanalytic approaches to the gothic, which rely on the assumption that the unconscious is the 'proper seat of fear'[27] ignore the historicity of the unconscious itself as explored by Foucault and Deleuze. Furthermore, she argues that psychoanalysis is limited by its desire to 'reduce everything to the sexual' and the 'equation of sexuality and identity.' While I have employed some analysis inspired by Freud, particularly the theory of abjection as developed by Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror*, it is my conviction that any reading of the gothic is more profitable where attention is turned to the social, political and cultural context of its strategic deployment as well as the sexual. David Punter argues that understanding the persistence of the attraction of the gothic must begin with an assumption that the gothic represents 'a way of relating to the real', where the real is defined as historical and psychological facts.[28] As such, he believes that we can discern a level of continuity from eighteenth century gothic fiction to the contemporary use of the gothic, based around its relationship with

[25] Botting, p. 2.
[26] Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', *The Standard Edition of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, translated from the German under the Genral Editorship of James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson. Volume XVII (1917 – 1919) (London: Hogarth, 1955) p. 217 – 256.
[27] Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters.* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1995) p. 8-9.
[28] Punter Vol.1, p. 165.

terror. Dealing again with eighteenth century gothic fiction, Botting argues that aspects of excess and transgression are presented at their extremes so as to provoke fear, and thus function to re-assert social values and boundaries:

> Gothic terrors activate a sense of the unknown and project an uncontrollable and overwhelming power which threatens not only the loss of sanity, honour, property or social standing but the very order which supports and is regulated by the coherence of those terms. [29]

These fears and anxieties coalesce in the figure of the monstrous other, the gothic monster, or the outsider. (The particular relation of this figure to subjectivity in Popular Metal music shall be discussed in Chapter Three.) Punter describes this discursive formation as a function of social order, where 'every society has to insist upon repression in order to function without excessive disruption'[30] however, from this position, the monster and the gothic cannot ever be truly radical, as while they represent liberation from convention, they embody the importance of social and cultural norms. The monstrous other is then both an outlet for excess and a warning against transgression.

Having established that there are certain historical continuities in the gothic mode we turn to the particularities of its resurgence. Work on the contemporary gothic has explored its transmutation into other non-literary cultural forms,[31] a concern with sickness and disease, as being 'obsessed by notions of the "cure" and similarly committed to ways of invalidating them',[32] or as postmodern, in the sense that identity, truth and reality are undermined.[33] Similarly, Punter states that the contemporary gothic reminds us that 'we cannot be certain of our knowledge of the past'.[34] Further aspects of the contemporary gothic as a distinct movement within the historical tradition of the gothic sensibility are

[29]Botting, p. 7.
[30] Punter vol. 1, p. 183.
[31] Punter vol. 2, Spooner (2006), and Botting .
[32] Punter vol. 2, p. 158.
[33] Botting (1996) and Halberstam (1995)
[34] Punter vol. 2, p. 179.

explored in Judith Halberstam's discussion of the shift in location of monsters and the monstrous and Lucie Armitt's discussion of Magical Realism.[35] For my purposes here it is the work of Catherine Spooner, Steven Bruhm, and Alexandra Warwick that have proven to be most useful in identifying a context from which emerges a distinct approach to subjectivity applicable to American Popular Metal. Both Catherine Spooner and Steven Bruhm define contemporary gothic texts as those originating in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Their definitions of the contemporary gothic focus upon not only the popularity of the gothic mode and its permeation into the mainstream, but its self-consciousness, and crucially, the presentation of the psychic life of the protagonist and the relation therein to the audience, be that audience a viewer, reader, or listener. Although Punter has argued that the gothic, concerned as it is with transgression and excess, appears in connection with *fin-de-siècle* apocalyptic tendencies,[36] Spooner argues that

> What distinguishes contemporary gothic…is on the whole not a sense of impending apocalypse, but rather three quite independent factors. Contemporary Gothic possesses a new self-consciousness about its own nature; it has reached new levels of mass production, distribution and audience awareness, enabled by global consumer culture; and it has crossed disciplinary boundaries to be absorbed into all forms of media…[it] is not preoccupied with the end of the world, but rather the end of innocence..[it] has now, furthermore, become supremely commericalized, [sic] be it mainstream or niche-marketed.[37]

And Steven Bruhm, in a discussion of contemporary gothic film, argues that these gothic texts centre around 'the problem of assimilating … social anxieties…into a personal narrative that in some way connects the Gothic protagonist to the reader or spectator'[38] and that '[w]hat becomes most marked in the contemporary Gothic – and what distinguishes it from its ancestors – is the protagonists' and the viewers' compulsive return to certain

[35] Lucie Armitt, 'The Magical Realism of the Contemporary Gothic' in Punter, David ed., *A Companion to the Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 305 – 316.
[36] David Punter, *Gothic Pathologies: The Text, The Body and The Law* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998)
[37] Spooner (2006) p. 23.
[38] Bruhm in Hogle ed., p. 261.

fixations, obsessions, and blockages.'[39] Bruhm discusses 'social anxiety' in terms of trauma, using a psychoanalytic framework drawn from the work of Freud. In terms of the Freudian 'lost object', concerning the process through which the self is constituted in infancy, he puts forward the argument that the contemporary gothic

> time and time again…presents us with traumatized heroes who have lost the very psychic structures that allow them access to their own experiences… such narratives emphasize a lost object, that object being the self.[40]

Alexandra Warwick further develops Bruhm's ideas and suggests that the contemporary gothic is:

> the manifestation of the desire *for* trauma, not the trauma of desire that finds itself prohibited, but something of a sense that trauma itself is the lost object, that the experience of trauma, and not the healing of it, is that which will make us whole.[41]

Her suggestion that the contemporary gothic stages trauma as an essential part of subject formation leads me to two observations concerning the work of American Popular Metal artists during this period: that their work is almost without exception based around moments of crisis precipitated by issues of present or past trauma, such as abuse occurring during childhood, or family trauma including the separation or divorce of parents, and secondly, that the performance of the song is a form of confession, given the central place that live performance in particular holds for this type of music. As I shall go on to argue, this type of confession is crucial to subject formation within the songs I have studied. In terms of the songs I have studied there is a sense of loss or mourning in that the subject is consistently referred to as being in some way damaged, or lacking in wholeness. This damaged self is broken, alienated, or has suffered loss, and is engaged with dealing with such sense of trauma. In Warwick's terms, it could be suggested that the subject needs that

[39] Bruhm in Hogle ed, p. 261.
[40] Bruhm in Hogle ed, p. 269.
[41] Warwick, p. 11.

sense of trauma, that it requires it for the process of subject formation. In extrapolating the contemporary gothic subject as construct from these works, one encounters a subject for whom their experience of trauma is a key component of subject formation and self-conception, and subject formation with relation to their presentation of self to others, in this case, their intended (or, in the case of live performance, physically present) audience.

In his *History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault discusses the role of discourse in the production of the subject, famously declaring that 'Western man has become a confessing animal', that the confession has become 'one of the West's most highly valued techniques for producing truth.'[42] This compulsion toward confession is, in Foucault's analysis, unfolded within a power relationship, where the witness to that confession is an authority 'who requires that confession', and furthermore where the act of confession affects the construction of the subject who makes that utterance, 'it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation.'[43] The compulsion to truth is elsewhere in Foucault's work revealed to be integral to the state's reliance upon the notion and production of individuality, a 'form of power which makes individuals subjects' in the sense that they are both subject to another by 'control and dependence', and to their own identity 'by a conscience or self-knowledge.'[44] This concern with self-knowledge is of particular interest here, and is further developed by Foucault in his later work 'Technologies of the Self'.[45] In the opening paper of this seminar, he explores the historical role of confession as a means to self-knowledge, and notes the development of a technology of self reliant upon a sacrifice of the self represented by obedience to the (institutional) witness of confession, the priest. In this technology, the subject, submitting to the will of the confessor, sacrifices a part of his self through the process of confession, bringing the self closer to God. In the same collection

[42] Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 59.
[43] Foucault *History of Sexuality* p. 61-62.
[44] Michel Foucault, 'The Subject And Power', *Critical Enquiry* 8:4 (1982). 777-795, p. 781.
[45] Michael Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', in Martin, Luther H., Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton eds., *Technologies of the Self*: *A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988) pp.16-49

of papers from that seminar, William E. Paden notes that the early American Puritans saw the self as an enemy to God, the true opposition being one between the self and God, not the self and the world. In this estimation the notion of self is the enemy to God.[46] Foucault notes that throughout the Christian tradition up until the eighteenth century, one cannot gain self-knowledge without an act of renunciation as described above. However, since that period, it has become possible to use the process of confession without the obligation of renunciation, a 'decisive break' in the tradition whereby the subject uses confessional techniques to 'constitute, positively, a new self.'[47] Thus confession becomes an act of completion rather than renunciation. It is a way to make the self whole, anew, and it is this aspect of confession which is here applied to the study of Popular Metal texts and of the contemporary gothic. This strain of Foucauldian theory has been applied of course to confessional literature such as the work of Sylvia Plath, Robert Lowell and Anne Sexton,[48] and I believe that there is a fruitful comparison to be made here between the study of that literature and those songs I approach in this study. There are three main points to be taken from such a comparison: that the confession is a means to reveal (or rather produce) the truth of the artist or the artist's situation, that the confession is a performance which implicates the (virtual) audience, and that the subjectivity of the artist is produced in relation to this confession. These songs, insofar as they recount trauma and thus purport to reveal the artist's true self – that is, the self aligned with first-person authenticity – are a confessional act in the terms which have here been outlined. Furthermore, the act of performance itself can be framed as a confessional mode, taking into consideration the reliance of the performer upon the audience.[49] Aside from the aspect of first-person authenticity so crucial to the success of the artist's integrity within the

[46] William E. Paden, 'Theaters of Humility and Suspicion: Desert Saints and New England Puritans' in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988) pp. 64-79
[47] Foucault, *Technologies*, p. 49.
[48] See, for example, Jo Gill ed., *Modern Confessional Writing: New Critical Essays* (London: Routledge, 2006)
[49] One might also see this drive to confession in the history of the autobiographical song, for more on this see Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor, *Faking It: The Quest For Authenticity in Popular Music* (London: Faber & Faber, 2007), Chapter 3, pp. 101-134.

culture, the aspect of performance and audience is absolutely applicable to the manner of circulation of the Popular Metal song. Live performance is integral to the music and culture, it holds a central place in the ideology of authenticity as well as the mythology of Rock and Metal music and culture in general. In Foucauldian terms, subjectivity is a process, and in Popular Metal texts and their performance, the subject is (re)produced through the performance of confession. This confession is not a renunciation of self, but a completion: it is that revelation which substantiates the attribution of truth to that figure. In the gothic mode, the broken or damaged self confesses transgression, excess, and a loss of control as a means to exert control, that is, that this confession is the basis for subject formation. However, the broken or damaged self may also be viewed in terms of a more specific masculine construction of the subject, as I will now discuss.

Masculinity and Narratives of Crisis

There is a significant bias within Rock music as a whole toward the masculine and the Caucasian, and Popular Metal, in the period under discussion, is certainly no exception. Although there are a small number of prominent female musicians working during this period they are greatly outnumbered by their male counterparts, white artists greatly outnumber artists of colour, and this is reflected in the source material I have used throughout this thesis. However, this is not to ignore the gendered nature of the subject under discussion and to this end I would like here to draw attention to a few factors which can be used to further contextualise the contemporary gothic subject in terms of gender, specifically the notion of 'masculine crisis' as a concept which was particularly prevalent during the 1990s, and Adam Rafalovich's use of this concept in analysing the lyrics of contemporary Metal music as an expression of contemporary masculine identity.[50] Although the notion of contemporary masculinity in crisis emerged in gender studies in the 1990s, John Beynon argues that such a crisis is largely a discursive, rather than actual,

[50] Adam Rafalovich, 'Broken and Becoming God-Sized: Contemporary Metal Music and Masculine Individualism', *Symbolic Interaction* 29:1 (2006) 19-32.

phenomenon, and can be seen to occur at other points in history. For him, 'contemporary masculinity is held to be in crisis because the central tenets upon which previous masculinity was based (patriarchy, bread-winning, tasks demanding strength) have been eroded.'[51] Drawing on the discursive notion of contemporary masculinity in crisis, Rafalovich develops an understanding of modern masculine individualism expressed in contemporary Metal lyrics through 'invocations of ultimate triumph and ultimate despair'[52] and where 'suffering and domination exist in a dialectical relationship, where the former often gives rise to the latter.' He identifies two major narratives which I have also found to be in evidence in the lyrics I analysed: that of the dominant self, and the broken self. The dominant self is described as depicting 'the destruction of, or victory over, perceived forces of repression', and the broken self as conveying 'relentless suffering and the futility of outside intervention.'[53] The assertion of the dominant self can be seen in some particular instances of threats to traditional masculinity where the male subject is presented as being especially vulnerable, for instance, when depicted as a child. This shall be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

The Narrative Persona and the Contemporary Gothic Subject

It is into this context of contemporary gothic and the American gothic that I place such artists as populate my period of study: Korn, Slipknot, Marilyn Manson, Nine Inch Nails, Tura Satana, and My Ruin. The formation of the subject in the work of each of these artists have sufficient similarities such that they can be usefully analysed through the construct of the contemporary gothic subject that I have put forward so far in this chapter, where the construct can be defined as a type of subjectivity occurring within contemporary gothic texts, wherein the subject's relation with trauma is presented as being crucial to

[51] John Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002) p. 159.
[52] Rafalovich, p. 20.
[53] Rafalovich, p. 22.

subject formation. To further expand this definition I will now turn to its appearance in the work of some of those artists whose work I have studied in more detail.

Korn

In assessing the work of each of these artists one quickly becomes aware of definitive lexical choices in each case. The lyrics of Korn are in part characterised by a vocabulary of violence and of a relationship with the external world figured through physical abuse, where 'they' are ripping, tearing, picking, raping the individual. This expression of victimisation is articulated at the level of the physical. As Korn's work progresses one is aware of an increasingly sophisticated use of rhythm and scansion which enables a more varied and controlled expression of emotion, which is aided by Davis' vocal style and range, in addition to his use of non-lyrical vocalisation. (As a performative technique the latter is a near-perfect example of those elements of the voice which cannot be accounted for by an analysis concentrating solely on words.) The visceral nature of this lexicon is furthered by the recurrent reference to the physical body as flesh. This further appears in terms of the dehumanisation of the female other and the association of the physical with the degenerate. In 'Trash' the female body is produced as use-commodity, subject for reflexive comment, and addictive substance:

> I just feel the craving
> I see the flesh and it smells fresh
> And it's just there for the taking
> These little girls they make me feel so god damn exhilarated
> I feel them up, I can't give it up
> The pain that I'm just erasing…
>
> …your feelings I can't help but rape them
> I'm sorry I don't feel the same
> My heart inside is constantly hating
> I'm sorry I just throw you away

I don't know why I'm so fucking cold
I don't know why it hurts me
All I wanna do is get with you
And make this pain go away…
…why do I have this torment
all I wanna do is fuck it away

The body as flesh appears here to dehumanise, in 'Make Me Bad' the flesh is an indicator of degeneration into madness and transgression:

I feel my[54] reason as it's leaving me
No not again
It's quite deceiving as I'm feeling the flesh
Make me bad

In the same song the phrase 'fun and games' (indicating the stereotype of the debauched Rock star) is juxtaposed with actuality of repetition and boredom which results in ennui and drives the individual to physical interaction for the relief of boredom but also authentication:

I am watching the rise and fall of my salvation
There's so much shit around me
Such a lack of compassion

I thought it would be fun and games
Instead it's all the same
I want something to do
Need to feel the sickness in you

Sickness, disease and infection are recurrent features not only of Korn's work but of their contemporaries. The recognition of a 'sickness' in others, in the sense that it invokes a

[54] Differing transcriptions of this song indicate that this word may be 'the' rather than 'my.' My own reading is that the word is 'my' pronounced 'ma.'

community, implies a normalisation of otherness which is again figured in terms of the body.

Another lexical recurrence is that of ennui, numbness and hollowness as conditions of the subject's social existence. However this is contrasted by a number of explicit references to pain and mental anguish. Numbness and pain become almost interchangeable in terms of the self's relationship with the world – in 'Dead', the opening song of *Issues* Davis whispers 'All I want in life is to be happy' followed by a stronger voice: 'every time I get ahead / I feel more dead' whilst 'Trash' from the same album, as we have seen, makes reference to the recurrence of pain and extremes of emotion: 'my heart inside is constantly hating'. In *Life Is Peachy* there are numerous explicit references to pain and the threat of emotion overwhelming the narrator. We are presented with a subject who variously characterises his mental state as alienated and numb or as suffering from a surfeit of emotion: a pattern which is repeated in other albums. Thus we apprehend a subject for whom pain and numbness characterise the resting state of consciousness. The absence of pleasure in this respect is marked: although pleasure, as the desire to laugh, is referenced as a lost object, or object of desire, it is not fully experienced at any point. References to hollowness or a lack of wholeness are also characteristic in this respect. For example, in 'Hollow Life' from *Untouchables*: 'falling through time / living a hollow life', or 'Got The Life' from *Follow The Leader*:

> Each day I can feel it swallow
> Inside something they took from me
> I don't feel your deathly ways
> Each day I feel so hollow
> Inside I was beating me

Here those references reinforce the idea of the experience of subjectivity as one in which the subject encounters or processes loss.

It is my conviction that these types of songs function in the confessional mode and as a form of catharsis for the exhortation of negative emotion: this is in fact acknowledged in two examples of references to the process of songwriting and the performance of those songs. Those two examples are 'Ass Itch' from *Life Is Peachy* and 'Beg For Me' from *Issues*. These songs, especially when taken in performance, are a critical example of the intersection of the different levels of star identity – the private self, the narrative self, and the media personality, and particularly the revelation of the private self that is important in constructing an image of the singer as 'authentic' in the conveyance of his feelings. 'Ass Itch'opens with the frustration of songwriting and a weariness for again writing about pain:

> I hate writing shit, it is so stupid
> What's my problem today?
> Maybe I'm depressed
> Maybe I'm helpless to what comes out my hand
> Pain… pain… pain

The very basic nature of the rhythm and accent on these lines as they are sung emphasises this weariness and acknowledges in the form of self-mockery the potential for the subject matter to become stale. However, the process of writing and of self-revelation is conveyed as a necessity:

> Tell me now, I want to know
> Is it me inside you see?
> Ah, it isn't fair
> I've got to let this song inside me free

In contrast, 'Beg For Me' is situated in the live context. The song starts by acknowledging the pressure of both public life and personal paranoia, which is then relieved by the experience of live performance. This is followed by a plea to the audience to participate and enable the catharsis that live performance brings:

Everyone is looking at me
I can't get out of bed
There is evil in my head
Everyone just let me be
Because when I hit the stage
It is gone and I am free

Goddamn you say you'll get up with me
You're the crowd c'mon give it back to me
You won't beg for me, be there for me, be there for me

Tell me how could this fade?
I am going insane
And I could not have my pain
Everyone please let me be
Because when I hit the stage
It is gone and I am free

What this song clearly shows is that the confessional aspect of the performance of the song acts as a catharsis, making the subject whole, or free, to use the song's own terminology. This subject reaches completion upon performance, and is as close to a transcendence from the pain-numbness-alienation relationship as is likely to be apprehended in these texts.

A further examination of the lyrical resource reveals a concern with childhood trauma as integral to the adult experience of subjectivity for the narrative persona. There are various examples of an attention to issues of masculinity and sexuality, referring again to Davis. The relationship between the dominant self and the broken self which I draw from Adam Rafalovich's work is displayed in 'Trash' and to a certain extent 'Make Me Bad', where Davis' self-identification as 'Faget', a reference to childhood bullying of which he was a victim, undercuts his position of strength. Although a great number of songs centre around times of severe emotional stress, the issue of childhood abuse is evident in a number of examples. It is alleged that Davis was sexually abused by a

neighbour during his childhood, and he characterises his relationship with his stepmother as abusive. Against this backdrop, the subject emerges as haunted by childhood experience. 'Daddy', the closing song from Korn's self-titled debut, explicitly references this abuse.

Slipknot

In terms of lexical choice, the work of Slipknot is marked by aggression, violence, destruction and vengeance. In common with Korn, the self is often presented as being at a point of severe emotional stress, and we find various examples of the self unable to overcome these feelings, at which point the song represents an expression of frustration and anger, and particularly with this act, revenge. Although autobiographical accounts of childhood abuse are not closely associated with this band, within the terms of the narrative persona of the songs parental relationships are characterised as abusive, and this trope is extended to describe the relationship of a generation with its parents. Imagery of abortion and malformation of childhood are frequent. Loss of control is both loss of reason and being overtaken by aggression, and here the power of that is embraced by the subject's repeated desire to obliterate the threat posed by the other, whatever that may be within the context of the song. Again, in common with Korn, the self is described as being in pain and at a point of crisis: 'I can't fucking take it anymore' ('My Plague', *Iowa*), 'I'm in so much pain / I have every fucking right to hate you / I can't take it' ('Metabollic', *Iowa*), 'If the pain goes on, I'm not gonna make it'('Duality', *The Subliminal Verses*), 'I can't control the pain / I can't control in vain'('The Virus of Life', *The Subliminal Verses*) for example. 'Too far gone' is associated with a loss of mental stability, emptiness and vulnerability: for example, from in 'Me Inside', from *Slipknot*: 'Too far gone, I'm catatonic… Empty shell and running naked'. The phrase also represents a dissociation from emotion, in 'People=Shit' from *Iowa*:

Come on down, and see the idiot right here
Too fucked to beg and not afraid to care
What's the matter with calamity anyway?
Right? Get the fuck outta my face
Understand that I can't feel anything

There is however a conflict between the second line 'not afraid to care' and the fifth line 'I can't feel anything'. This contradiction reveals the tension between self-hate for allowing vulnerability and the aggressive, reactionary self that is cut off from all emotion – the dominant self and the broken self in conflict. This dual being of victim and aggressor is also important in Slipknot's work in terms of subject position. Drawing on this, the narrative persona of Slipknot's work is often presented as the spokesperson for a generation betrayed by its parents. Whilst the first person 'I' is used most often, this is often used in tandem with 'we', with reference to both the band and the audience. Two songs from *Iowa* will be used as examples of this. The first, 'I Am Hated' begins by presenting a first person narrative persona: 'The whole world is my enemy and I'm a walking target', both expressing alienation and inviting victimisation. Throughout the song references are made to 'us' and 'we', directly implicating the audience in the song as performance: 'Eat motherfuckers alive who cross us / I know you're all tired of the same old bosses.' The middle section of the song: 'I am hated / you are hated / we are hated' confers the status of alienated victim on the audience and the narrative persona, but in tandem with other lines in the song such as 'nobody gives a fuck / it doesn't change the fact that you suck' and references to an unseen other, 'you', it is implied that this other is also an object of hate. The two lines that proceed this: 'they all lost their dad or their wife just died / they never got to go outside, shut up' implies a frustration with the kind of revelation of past experience which Warwick earlier described as characteristic of America's obsession with trauma and subjectivity. Later in the song the singer declares 'but what's inside of me, you'll never know', as a defence mechanism. As the singer has, through the course of the song, revealed how he feels it is likely that this is a kind of

defence mechanism, further proof of alienation from the other, rather than a rejection of the confessional mode altogether – as through the course of the song the singer has indeed told us what he is experiencing. The use of phrases such as 'we are the anti-cancer / we are the only answer' and 'we are the source of conscience / we are distorted sentients' further emphasises the assumption of a community of which the narrative persona is a leader, and points to the relationship between the broken self and the dominant self, the latter emerging as a result of the former. The subject as a spokesperson for a community is also in evidence in the song 'New Abortion' from the same album. The key line in this song occurs toward the end: 'How's it feel to be the new abortion / the only generation to suffer extortion', linking to an earlier line in that verse 'it's like a big conspiracy / fields of dejected morbid progeny / they always say that it's always our fault'. Here it is implied that the audience are also subject to 'their' oppression and enhances the notion of a community of listeners. Evocations of conspiracy are furthered by accusations of control: 'everywhere you look it's like they know / their fingerprints are hidden by control' and which lead to a determined resistance: 'this is where the line is drawn see / you can't take my soul away from me'. This evocation of a mental state of paranoia centralises the performance of narrative persona as somewhat unstable. The descent into madness, as represented with other artists as a lament to the loss of critical faculty is here used as a position of strength. Alterity and alienation from mainstream society is presented as a carnivalesque threat, which is continued elsewhere in their work with recurrent references to revenge or the threat of destruction of the other. This sense of alterity, the appropriation of the subject position of social outsider is particularly evident in the use of the image and narrative position of the serial killer in their work in such songs as 'Vermillion' from *The Subliminal Verses*. This song refers to a female other as 'my dahlia', a reference to the murder of Elizabeth Short, the 'Black Dahlia' – a subject Marilyn Manson depicts in some of his artworks. In 'Vermillion' the female is depicted as fragile but also as representing temptation and as the focus for a male subject who desires to destroy the female. The

serial killer may be viewed as a contemporary gothic monster, that which is located within and as a product of society rather than as an external force, as will be explored later in Chapter Three. Here however it is noted that the serial killer appears in the work of Slipknot as a figure of symbolic violence, the self of pathological individualism: 'I'm a slave and I am a master / no restraints and unchecked collectors / I exist to my need to self-oblige.' The subject is here unable to control his urges and desires, and becomes a monster through unchecked individualism. The serial killer here then represents an extreme, the monstrous potential of the individual.

The notion of spokesperson for a generation betrayed by their parents and the invocation and appropriation of images of disgust and grotesquery coalesces in the use of the term 'maggots' to refer to their fans. The song 'Pulse of the Maggots' from *The Subliminal Verses* provides a key example of this usage and its implications. The song opens with lead singer Corey Taylor speaking to address the audience:

> This is the year when hope fails you. When the test subjects run the experiment and the bastard you know is the hero you hate. Cohesion is possible if we try. There's no reason, no lesson, no time like the present. Tell me right now, what do you have to lose? Except your soul. Who's with us?[55]

The 'bastard you know' line is reminiscent of Marilyn Manson's 'the boy that you love is the monster you fear' line from 'Man That You Fear' and serves the same purpose: to situate the subject as a victim in search of vengeance. This is furthered with the lyrics: 'We've dealt with a manic subversion / I won't let the truth be perverted / and I won't leave another victim deserted' and the chorus refrain

> we are the new diabolic
> we are the bitter bucolic
> if I have to give my life you can have it
> we are the pulse of the maggots.

[55] My punctuation.

Drawing on a rhetoric of victimisation and rebellion, the singer develops a role of leadership, making truth and authenticity claims for the band, their music and attitude. Furthermore, invoking the presumption of a collective experience of betrayal, the singer encourages the listener to identify with this community in order to achieve a sense of cohesion or hope that is otherwise missing from the society they depict.

Nine Inch Nails

The work of Nine Inch Nails is closely associated with the private persona of Trent Reznor, although some songs do feature narrative personae that are not immediately identified as autobiographical figures, for example in *Year Zero*. The vocabulary of the work is strongly identified with religion: themes of sin, transgression and salvation are common, with the inclusion of a strong physical element. For example, in 'Closer', perhaps Reznor's best-known song, sex is presented as a route to the divine: 'I wanna fuck you like an animal / you get me closer to god'. In contrast to Korn and Slipknot there are various songs which deal directly with the individual and his relationship with god, or indeed lack of that relationship, for example in 'Heresy': 'God is dead / and no-one cares / if there is a hell I'll see you there'. However, unlike Marilyn Manson, who takes a stance more readily associated with atheism, the work of Nine Inch Nails concentrates more on the desire for faith and the disappointment experienced by the individual in finding none.

There is a quality of angst present in Reznor's lyrics which is distinct from that of Korn or Slipknot, although the relationship between the broken and dominant masculine selves persists, and there is considerable emphasis upon the self as broken, particularly in his earlier work, where the dominant self tends toward nihilism. For example in 'Piggy':

> Black and blue and broken bones
> You left me here I'm all alone
> …What am I supposed to do

I lost my shit because of you
Nothing can stop me now I just don't care anymore

The betrayal figured in this song is of a personal, rather than generational or parental nature, a theme which persists throughout Reznor's work. In the song 'Somewhat Damaged' we are presented with a narrator who is

Broken bruised forgotten sore
Too fucked up to care any more
Poisoned to my rotten core
Too fucked up to care anymore

The song angrily accuses an unseen other of betrayal and desertion:

How could I ever think
It's funny how
Everything that swore
It wouldn't change is
Different now just like you
Would always say we'll
Make it through then
My head fell apart
And where were you?

'Make it through' is a phrase that also appears in 'We're In This Together', also from *The Fragile*:

You and me
We're in this together now
None of them can stop us now
We will make it through somehow

However even in this song, where the relationship between the narrator and the unseen other would seem to suggest solidarity against an unseen aggressor (possibly the same aggressor mentioned in 'The Fragile': 'we'll find the perfect place to go and we can run and hide / I'll build a wall and we can keep them on the other side') the individual is 'used and beaten up'. We repeatedly apprehend the subject at moments of crisis and an uncertainty of knowledge of the present and of the past. This loss of certainty is described by David Punter as the major theme of the contemporary gothic, an 'insoluble epistemological problem…namely, that we cannot be certain of our knowledge of the past…contemporary gothic…has discovered, one might say, the impossibility, the undecidability, of discovery.'[56] The subject in Reznor's lyrics consistently raises the problematic nature of self-knowledge in this way, for example, in 'Right Where It Belongs' from *With Teeth*. We are presented initially with a by now familiar image of a broken or hollow subject:

> See the safety of the life you have built
> Everything where it belongs
> Feel the hollowness inside your heart
> And it's all right where it belongs

The singer then asks: 'What if everything around you isn't quite as it seems / what if all the world you think you know is an elaborate dream?' Faced with this possibility the subject, in re-assessing his identity, questions whether that identity might be a source of fear:

> If you look at your reflection
> Is that all you want to be?
> What if you could look right through the cracks
> Would you find yourself, find yourself afraid to see?

[56] Punter, vol. 2, p. 179.

Self-assessment is an issue also raised in 'Hurt', again from *The Downward Spiral*. Like 'Closer', 'Hurt' is one of Nine Inch Nails' best known songs and is a regular feature of the band's live set. 'Hurt' explores the issue of drug abuse as self harm, in a song which features only vocals and piano. The song presents a narrative of the broken self who uses pain to verify existence:

> I hurt myself today
> To see if I still feel
> I focus on the pain
> The only thing that's real

Here the singer repeatedly asks repeatedly 'what have I become?' in disgust and lamentation. This mournful song also suggests a Christ-like persona for the singer: 'I'll wear this crown of shit / upon my liar's chair' – a line Cash sang as 'crown of thorns', reinforcing the allusion to Christ and the aspect of sinner and saviour while moving away from Reznor's use of the profane as a route to the sacred.[57] Again with this song we are presented with the subject in mental decline or crisis, caught between the desire to self-destruct and the desire to have some form of spiritual or religious faith, the loss of which faith being presented as a cause of the damage to the subject. While Marilyn Manson rails against the hypocrisy of and damage caused by American Christianity as widespread belief, and rejects God, Reznor in many ways grieves for the individual who is without faith. Religious idioms are a common feature of the lyrical vocabulary, that is, that the self is lacking when it fails to appropriate this framework. In his early work Reznor expresses an anger at God for not existing: later, in *Year Zero*, he expresses anger at an America in the grip of an administration influenced heavily by fundamentalist Christianity. Reznor's work, situated in the American context, expresses the loss experienced by the individual where religious faith is either challenged or removed, but where the framework in which

[57] For more on this connection see Andrew Tatusko, 'Transgressing Boundaries in the Nine Inch Nails: The Grotesque as a Means to the Sacred', *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 11 (Fall 2005) (9340 words) <http://www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/art11-nineinchnails.html> accessed August 2007.

the subject understands itself is still one steeped in the rhetoric of religiosity, certainly in terms of purity and the sacred. In these terms physical and sexual contact represent the route to transcendence, but also the route to damnation.

Tairrie B: Tura Satana and My Ruin

Both Tura Satana and My Ruin are more minor acts in comparison to those other artists whose work I am studying here, however, the work of Tairrie B provides some interesting comparisons and contrasts to certain aspects of the contemporary gothic subject. Arguably, her work is much more varied, both in terms of musical direction, content, and indeed in vocal style; moving from hip-hop influences in her work with Tura Satana to a vocal growl in her later work that is more commonly found in Hardcore Metal. In common with all the other artists here, the subject in Tairrie B's work is often portrayed at times of extreme emotional stress, and expressed with aggression as well as resilience. For example, in the song 'American Psycho', from *The Horror of Beauty*:

> This is not an exit, I need to feel something
> American psycho my confession means nothing…
> …This is no attempt to pre-empt my own death
> I won't kill myself and I'm not taking requests
> The machine has left me scarred
> Scared of its insanity
> I've burned too many bridges
> To pretend to be holy

Her work uses religious imagery and thematics, but to a much greater extent than that of Nine Inch Nails. The phrase 'Blasphemous Girl', originally a song title from *Speak and Destroy*, is also the name of Tairrie B's jewellery and clothing boutique store on myspace.com, and she has had the phrase tattooed on her arm. This phrase places the subject as always-already damned, and in the song 'Preacher', from *Speak and Destroy*, the subject is explicitly placed as being caught between Christian notions of good and evil:

'I've got the Devil in my corner and Jesus on my wall'. In contrast to the work of Nine Inch Nails and Marilyn Manson, this use of religious imagery is not deployed for shock value or as a critique of Christianity; rather it is used as a medium to explore (often sexual) relationships. The song 'Close Your Eyes', again from *Speak and Destroy*, is a good example of how this works:

> This place is hell to me and I can never get no sleep
> There is a devil in my bed with me whose talk is cheap
> You feel like heaven to me all I want to do is sleep
> You're like an angel lying next to me you look so sweet…
> …My tangled hair will weave a web of lies within my sheets
> And in the morning I'll be nailed where you crucified me
> Your blackened hair will leave a stain inside my mind so deep
> And when tomorrow comes I'll wish that you would worship me

This is also seen in 'Horrible Pain (Within My Heart)' from the same album:

> He is the horrible pain within my heart
> My religion, my sanctuary, my church, my sacrifice…
> …He drives a stake into my soul makes me bleed
> Makes me whole, drinks me, devours me, intoxicates me

Her work with Tura Satana is, as was discussed in the introduction, more explicitly political than her later work, and utilises imagery and vocabulary which are familiar from the work of the artists already discussed. Throughout, we find repeated references to the self as cut, bruised, or damaged; and to the subject as empty, or in pain. For example, in 'Empty', from *All Is Not Well*: 'got nothing left of me / and it's killing me / to be so empty', as in 'Scavenger Hunt', from the same album:

> There is a girl who lived inside me and I can hear her breathe
> Her smell is sweet but underneath her blood is boiling to a seethe
> And she leaves me scarred, scared and bruised

I'm so confused
Why can't you see, she isn't me

We also find references to imagined violence paired with the subject's sense of emptiness, for example 'Letter to the Editor' from *A Prayer Under Pressure of Violent Anguish*: 'My heart is an empty hole / hands wanna wrap around your throat', however this violence tends to much less graphic than that found in the work of other artists here.

Marilyn Manson

With Manson's work the narrative persona and public figure are not separated from the private persona to the same degree as with any of the artists discussed above. Although this type of music tends toward the identification of the narrative persona with the private persona, in Manson's case this identification is reversed: the persona created in terms of the text comes to signify the private persona in terms of character creation and as a public figure. Whilst this is in its nascent form with other artists, Manson fully inhabits this cross-identification, but while a Korn song may purport to tell us something of Davis' life experience, a Manson song is an extension of the persona existent at the level of popular media and from which there is little deviation. In some ways then this is less revealing of the private persona. Manson's work will be discussed in some depth at a later point, so a detailed lyrical analysis will not be done here, however here I would like to situate his work in reference to those other artists discussed above.

The self in Manson's work is expressed through a hyper-individualism that consciously plays with the notion of celebrity as a performed and spectacular subjectivity. Throughout his work but particularly in the 'triptych' of albums *Antichrist Superstar*, *Mechanical Animals* and *Holy Wood* the Rock star / Manson persona refers inward to the narrative persona and outward to the public persona – the private persona all but disappears. As with those other artists described above, Manson is portrayed as a Christ-like figure able to offer salvation in an explicit critique of American Christian ideology. In

relation to the destructive figure presented in Slipknot's work, the Manson figure is an avenging angel who will destroy the world to restore order. In contrast to those figures discussed above, the past which haunts Manson's work is not explicitly the past of the private persona, but the past of America, as figured through the parent generation. Manson draws upon the collective figures of American parents, children and the institutions of the school and the church as ideological state apparatuses as representative of the continuance of history within the state of America, and as repressive institutions. Again as with Slipknot, the narrative persona is located as a product of society, one which possesses the potential to effect revenge through destruction. Manson is presented as a spokesperson for a generation and as a product of their subjugation: a figure which self-consciously draws upon and disrupts American ideology by the production of an individual who possesses a quality of the hyperreal as suggested by Jean Baudrillard, a point which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

Conclusion

Although some work has been done on popular music in the study of the contemporary gothic, it has not been used as a context for the evaluation of the subject on a scale such as this, or applied to this group of artists. This chapter has established my work within the expanding area of the study of the contemporary gothic, and suggested a model of the contemporary gothic subject as a tool for the further investigation of the subject within American Popular Metal, while introducing the work of key artists of the period 1994-2004.

The gothic has been defined as a mode, rather than a genre, and one which is defined by its adaptability. The American gothic, as a key context for the work I am doing here, is situated as the dark side of the American dream, furthermore, that the two are interconnected. Where the American gothic is engaged in a struggle to uncover a 'monstrous past', the contemporary gothic may be characterised as a 'manifestation of the desire for trauma' as a way for the subject to construct identity. That is, that the

contemporary gothic subject requires trauma and obsessively returns to it as a means of constructing identity.

Drawing on existing theories of the contemporary gothic and Foucault's work on confession, I have suggested the key role that the confession of trauma plays in subject formation for the contemporary gothic subject. Having established some of the common themes in the work of the artists of the period I shall now go on to explore the role of the body and the physical in this type of subject formation.

Chapter Two

The Body and Corporeal Verification

This chapter will investigate the role of the body in subject formation for the contemporary gothic subject. In looking at themes of pain and violence in the lyrics of artists of the period, and instances of violence to the body associated with the culture which surrounds this work, I intend to illustrate what I term the process of corporeal verification, whereby the body and the physical are used to add material factualness – a sense of solid reality – to the subject's sense of self, which in many cases can be seen to have been undermined by a sense of crisis. This is particularly noticeable when looking at the male subject and the male body, as was discussed in the last chapter with reference to Adam Rafalovich's theorisation of the role of suffering and domination in the portrayal of masculine individualism, and upon which I intend to expand in this chapter. With reference to Chris Shilling's theorisation of the 'body project' discussed in the Introduction, and moving away briefly from my established methodology**,** I will argue that corporeal verification through acts of consensual violence – such as body modification and quasi-violent crowd activities in the live setting – creates a liminal space in which notions of harm and consent, and their relations to the wider social structure, are questioned.[1] These acts of consensual violence thus function as sites of resistance and self-determination, albeit in a fashion limited by the bounds of the western, late capitalist framework in which they are conceived. Drew Leder explores a similar concept in *The Absent Body*.[2] Drawing on Anthony Giddens' theorisation of lifestyle, Leder points to the symbiotic nature of the decline of traditional narratives and the increasing reliance on lifestyle, and the increased value which is placed upon these choices in response to the failure of those traditional narratives to provide a stable sense of self. For Leder, the body

[1] For a further study of this with particular regard to the masculine body in film, see Melissa Iocco's 'Addicted to Affliction: Masculinity and Perversity in *Crash* and *Fight Club*' in which she discusses the repetition and reliving of trauma as well as consensual violence as a powerful form of resistance and self-determination in contemporary society.

[2] Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990)

becomes invisible, latent, until it is brought to our attention through damage or deviance, a process he calls dys-appearance, and for which pain provides us with the clearest example.[3] In the context of uncertainty to which I have alluded, in terms of crisis and uncertainty on an intensely personal level, the body, and particularly damage to the body, provide a degree of certainty. It should be noted however that pain is not an exclusively physical experience, and as I shall go on to discuss, it is an experience which draws into question the division between body and mind. In doing so, I wish to explore how pain and sensation play a central role in the production of subjectivity for the contemporary gothic subject.

As was described in Chapter One, the voice which emerges through Korn's lyrics is characterised in part by a vocabulary of violence, emotional pain articulated at the level of the physical, and recurrent references to feelings of numbness or hollowness. What I shall look at here are specific instances in which emotional pain and physical pain intersect, and the manner in which the bodily and the physical are used to highlight or intensify a sense of personal crisis that is marked by uncertainty. This process is shown in a variety of ways. Firstly, there is the basic use of physical vocabulary to embody emotional pain, such as 'ripping', 'tearing' and 'scratching', and the transference of the emotional to the physical, as can be seen in the song 'Chi' from *Korn*:

> Sick of the same old thing
> So I dig a hole [and] bury [the][4] pain…
> …We enter in my head
> Feeling like I'm god
> With the world around me
> Can't you feel this pain
> Reaming through my heart
> Screaming through my veins
> Nothing I can kill

[3] Leder, p. 184.
[4] The bracketed words are not entirely clear upon listening to the recording, and existing transcriptions vary in their inclusions of these words.

The stinging of my heart
Can't you feel my heart
Can't you take my heart … away

More pointedly, in the song 'Need To', also from *Korn*, the physical is used again to emphasise the intensity of the narrator's feelings, he is 'confused, fighting myself / wanting to give in, needing your help' and feels 'helpless', with reference to an unattainable female other, and this is likened to 'ripping my insides each time I'm with you'. A similar use of the physical to convey intensity is seen with the use of a reference to bleeding in the song 'No-One's There', from *Untouchables*, which portrays the singer in a mental state characterised by frustration and isolation. The figurative use of 'bleeding' contrasts with the non-physical state with which it is paired:

Where are all these feelings hiding
Dancing in and out my mind
Burning up all that I long for
Feeding me till my decline
Where are you?
My soul is bleeding
I am searching
Am I blind?
All alone and bound forever
Trapped inside me all the time

In these examples the physical, the bodily, functions to lend an air of solidity to that which is otherwise intangible or characterised by uncertainty. In other songs, the infliction of violence upon either the self or others is portrayed as a relief from emotional pain, for example in 'Lies', again from *Korn*: 'I tried, you win / my life is ripping your heart out and destroying my pain', and in 'Here To Stay', from *Untouchables*, where instances of violence toward the self are used as a form of control:

So I take my face and bash it into a mirror
I won't have to see the pain, pain, pain…
…Can I throw it all away
Take back what's mine
So I take my time
Gliding the blade down the line
Each cut closer to the vein, vein, vein
The state is elevating as the hurt turns into hating
Anticipating all the fucked up feelings again
The hurt inside is fading
This shit's gone way too far

As well as acts of violence, release from emotional pain is also shown to be found in the cathartic, confessional process of writing and performance, as was explored with relation to the confessional mode in the last chapter and the songs 'Ass Itch' from *Life Is Peachy* and 'Beg For Me' from *Issues.*

The references to be found in the work of Slipknot follow a similar pattern to those found in Korn, particularly with respect to instances of vulnerability being countered with violence as a means to re-assert control, following Rafalovich's model of masculine individualism. Their vocabulary is highly aggressive, as explored in the previous chapter, and we again find a tendency to describe life in terms of pain or numbness, such as in 'Metabollic' from *IOWA*:

Fail – suppressing every feeling
I'm in so much pain
I have every fucking right to hate you
I can't take it

References to numbness can be found to intertwine with instances of violence upon the self, such as in 'Scissors', from *Slipknot*:

It's hard to stay between the lines of skin

Just cos I have nerves, don't mean that I can feel
I wasn't very much fun to be with anyway
Just let the blood run red cos I can't feel

Or in 'Everything Ends', from *IOWA*, where it is set against the background of a sense of self which has been undermined:

I haven't slept since I woke up
And found my whole life was a lie, motherfucker
This is the end of everything
You are the end of everything
Shallow skin, I can paint with pain
I mark the trails on my arms with your disdain
Everyday it's the same, I love, you hate
But I guess I don't care anymore

There is a deep sense of nihilism linked to the usage of the physical and the violent, for example in 'Disasterpiece', again from *IOWA*, which opens with a particularly violent sexual image:

I wanna slit your throat and fuck the wound
I wanna push my face in and feel the swoon
I wanna dig inside, find a little bit of me
Cos the line gets crossed when you don't come clean

This first image is the point in the song at which the singer is most dominant; as it progresses the singer's words are more marked with reference to his own state of emptiness, vulnerability and ultimately feelings of worthlessness:

Take a look inside my soul is missing
All I have is dead, so I'll take you with me
Feel like I'm erased so kill me just in case…
…scratching and clawing all the way

you won't let me fucking stay
I'm not supposed to be here
I'm not supposed to be

The work of Nine Inch Nails also displays the use of the physical as release or relief, such as in 'Hurt', and 'March of the Pigs' from *The Downward Spiral*: 'Take the skin and peel it back / now doesn't that make you feel better?' There is a heavier use of religious imagery and symbolism than in the work of the two previous artists, with the song 'Heresy', also from *The Downward Spiral*, clearly linking Christianity to the idea of life as pain:

He flexed his muscles to keep his flock of sheep in line
He made a virus that would kill off all the swine
His perfect kingdom of killing suffering and pain
Demands devotion atrocities done in his name

In contrast to the work of the previous two bands, the physical imagery used to describe emotional pain in the work of Nine Inch Nails is in many ways less graphic, concentrating on words such as 'broken', 'bruised', and 'battered', rather than on the skin or flesh being pierced, ripped or torn, although there are examples of such usages, as I have already quoted. The idea of the self as numb is frequently associated with the idea of the cyborg or the machine, which I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, and so shall not elaborate upon here.

In common with Nine Inch Nails, the work of My Ruin also frequently uses the image of bruising, as well as the use of 'wounds' or 'scars' to describe emotional trauma, for example in 'Cosmetic', from *Terror*: 'My body just wants more scars / And I can feel them wounds / I can't heal them' or particularly in 'Evening Prayer' from *A Prayer Under Pressure of Violent Anguish*:

My mouth is still cruel

My skin is in bondage
My body is scarred
From lyrics I've carved
Bruises I've healed
Lips that I've starved
Wounds I've replaced
With love and with hate
The truth set me free

This song is an example of the physical and the bodily being used for reasons of intensity. Elsewhere, the physical is explicitly used to 'make real' the self, for example in 'American Psycho', from *The Horror Of Beauty*: 'Flesh, blood, tongue / I'm real'. As well as these factors, which we have seen repeated in the work of the other artists mentioned here, the body is more strongly gendered than in the work of the male artists I have discussed, for example: 'Lips, Hips, Tits, I am the power of a woman strong' in 'Terror' from *Speak and Destroy*. Tairrie B's earlier work with Tura Satana focuses directly on the female body as political territory with regard to abortion rights, in 'Put Your Head Out' from *All Is Not Well*:

My pussy my choice..
…The government is saying we got no voice
Fuck that cos they can't control me
Or tell me what to do with my body…
…A woman's rights are on the line here
That's why I'm here
Not one, one of a million, the majority
And the government ain't gonna be whoring me

This form of direct politicisation of the body with regard to state control is markedly different from anything to be found in the work of the other artists discussed here, and the assertion of a confident female figure is in certain contrast to the male figures I have

already mentioned whose subjectivity is informed to a great extent by powerlessness. What we find here with regard to women's rights as they are explicitly dealt with is the assertion of confidence as a means to reclaim lost power rather than violence. In the song 'Victim', also from *All Is Not Well*, which deals with the issue of rape, we find a refusal of the label: 'choose to refuse to be a victim'.

The Tura Satana song 'Flux', from *Relief Through Release* deals with the issue of self-harm, opening with the singer stating that she is 'barely alive cos I'm dead on the inside'. The song describes an ambivalent relationship with cutting:

> Sleepless
> And I feel this
> Helpless
> Within this illness
> Keep this
> In the darkness
> Kill this
> But I want this

The singer expresses a feeling of being trapped, both needing and loathing cutting, and being resigned to it: 'cause there ain't no use / I love my self-abuse'. The link to pain and numbness is made explicit in this song: 'so here I go again trying to numb my pain / cut a little deeper but it feels the same'. In an interview with *The Dreaded Press* in February 2008, Tairrie B describes how this song was received by some fans:

> But I think there's a responsibility to some degree - I'm not going to get up there and say to kids 'oh, go kill your parents' or whatever, do this, do that, 'go out and cut yourself'. We used to have girls come to Tura Satana shows, and they'd literally walk into the show or signing and be pulling out razor blades and start slicing into themselves, cutting their arms up and stuff.
>
> And they'd walk up to me with lyrics and say 'oh, you sing in "Flux" that we should cut a little deeper' and I'd say, well, 'cut a little deeper' means my *words*

> cutting. They lyrics are not always literal, they're metaphorical, and you have to listen a little closer to interpret them. I'm not a cutter – I'm not Casey Chaos promoting cutting yourself. I'm promoting healing yourself, y'know? Heal the scars, don't make 'em.[5]

Tairrie B's claim that the image of cutting is used in a purely metaphorical sense is interesting, especially as she says that she is 'not a cutter', which removes it from the realm of autobiographical confession. The image of lyrics as scars or cuts is of course repeated in 'Evening Prayer' from a later album, but the singer's words in this interview are quite revealing, especially with regard to the positive nature of the evocation of pain and self-harm and the figural use of self-harm to denote emotional trauma.

What emerges from a close reading of the lyrics of these artists is a focus upon the notion of pain and numbness to describe the singer's mental state, and the figural use of the physical and the bodily to emphasise the intensity of these feelings. This is done with particular emphasis upon both bodily damage, such as bleeding or bruising, and instances of violence upon the body, be that instances of self-harm or violence toward another. I shall use the term corporeal verification to describe the role which the bodily plays in the production of subjectivity for the contemporary gothic subject. I will suggest that the body performs truth-acts for the subject, acting as a tool of verification. This term draws in part on Elaine Scarry's theory of analogical verification, as well as Chris Shilling's theory of corporeal realism as explored in *The Body in Culture, Technology and Society*, which seeks to codify an approach to sociological enquiry that places the body at the centre of study, and situates the body and society as real things which cannot be 'dissolved into discourse'.[6] In addition, I have looked toward theories of body and performance art, which, although having slightly different emphases (as I shall go on to discuss) converge upon the idea of the body performing acts of verification or substantiation for the subject

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[5] 'Interview: Tairrie B and Mick Murphy of My Ruin', *The Dreaded Press*, February 5th 2008. <http://www.rock-metal-music-reviews.com/interview-tairrie-b-and-mick-murphy-of-my-ruin/> accessed May 2008.

[6] Shilling (2005) p. 12

and also for the society in which they are embedded. By foregrounding the role of the body in subjectivity I hope then to explain some of the aspects of the culture surrounding Popular Metal which rely on an extreme or pointed physicality.

The use of the body as a source of authenticity or verification may be seen in other art forms, such as body and performance art. Tracey Warr posits that the work of Dada performance artists Tristan Tzara and Kurt Schwitters in the 1910s and 20s incorporated 'physical bodily realities as a challenge to the "pretence" of traditional representation in art' arguing that the realities of world war brought the 'reality of corporeal existence into sharp focus.'[7] In the post World War Two era, the work of artists such as Allan Kaprov, Yven Klein and Jackson Pollock explored the role of the artist in creating the artwork, celebrating not the representational success of the portrait or the sculpture, but the authority of the artist and the ability of the artist to label and create, such as with Pollock's action paintings. (It should also be noted at this point that the tradition of the artist-as-art in performance and body art has an influence upon the work of Marilyn Manson, whom I shall discuss in a later chapter.) In the 1970s this form of body art developed into performance art and photographic self-portraiture. This relatively short period in terms of art history in which body art flourished can also be seen to be a reaction to specific cultural pressures enacted upon the subject. The desire for an authentic sense of self in this context is heavily influenced by a resistance to the increasing dominance of commodity culture and the growing dominance of the society of the spectacle which Guy Debord and the Situationists identified, for example. By placing his or her body at the centre of the artwork the body artist creates a piece which it is largely impossible to reproduce. The most extreme case of this verification or authentication is found in the artist's willingness to endure pain, and it is this engagement which engenders the implicitly political aspect of body art with regard to ownership of the body and the right to control that body. The terms body art and performance art often occur as synonyms, however there is an important

[7] Tracey Weir ed., *The Artist's Body* (London: Phaidon, 2000), p. 11-12.

distinction to be made. Body art, as distinct from performance art, originated in the context of avant garde art of the 1970s, with most activity focused in America and Europe. The work of artists such as Chris Burden, Gina Pane, Marina Abramović, Ulay (Uwe Laysiepen) and Carole Schneeman are significant in this field. The works of these artists include (but are not limited to) placing themselves in various forms of danger, or inflicting pain upon themselves through such activities as cutting – one of Gina Pane's pieces, *La Lait Chaud* (Warm Milk, 1972) involved her using a razor blade to cut herself in front of an audience, first on her back, turned away from the audience, and then turning to face the audience, her cheeks. The reaction of the audience was most pointed when the blade was turned towards her face, and at the end of the piece a video camera was pointed towards the audience in order that they observe their own response. One of Chris Burden's most famous pieces is *Shoot*, performed in 1971, involved his friend shooting him in the arm. In both of these pieces, the reaction of the audience is key. Cathy O'Dell uses Burden's piece as an example of the manner in which masochistic body art of the 1970s drew attention to broken social contracts in the context of the Vietnam War.[8] Although the artist chose to be shot, this stands in contrast to the lack of choice enacted by the drafting of soldiers to fight in Vietnam. The consent of the artist to participate raises questions for the viewer concerning the motivation for the willingness to undergo pain. In this way the viewer is alienated from the performer, however, the ontological presence of the body of the artist draws attention to the materiality of the viewer's own body. O'Dell argues that there is a critical distance between the performer and the audience in such performances, such that would make the form inappropriate for the purposes of political protest, because the audience cannot be won over and convinced of new solutions to the problems it presents.[9] Burden's piece is not a direct protest in the context of the conflict in Vietnam, but evocative of the wider effect of that conflict on American society. In the depiction and

[8] Cathy O'Dell, *Contract With The Skin: Modernism, Performance Art and the 1970s* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) p. 12.
[9] O'Dell, p. 12.

enactment of actual pain and suffering, as oppose to their mimicry in more conventional forms of theatre, these kinds of performances serve to draw attention to the body/self of both the performer and the viewer. Issues of consent and contract abound in the framework of moral and legal issues which the act of performance disrupts, placing the performing subject and the viewing subject within a frame of reference with regard to the body in which that body is presented as an explicitly political territory. Amelia Jones notes that while performance art is often defined by the redemptive desire for art to transform human life, body art 'does not strive toward a utopian redemption but, rather, places the body/self within the realm of the aesthetic *as a political domain.*'[10] Crucial here is her distinction between body and performance art on the basis of the politicisation of the aesthetic domain. Performance art, although it places emphasis upon the agency of the artist through its abandonment of traditional representational art, lacks this pointed politicisation. The reason for this, I believe, lies in the value ascribed to the artist's willingness to place their body in harm's way. What must be added here is that this decision to experience pain and discomfort is a challenge to a contemporary society increasingly geared toward comfort, ease and efficiency as far as these things denote happiness. To avoid pain, as much as it can be seen to be a natural human instinct, can also be seen to be a heightened condition of modernity and developed capitalism, with its attendant growth of leisure. Insofar as the body is the focus of the circulation of power in high modernity, to voluntarily damage the body and endure pain is anachronistic in the context of a social disposition toward ease and comfort and the craving for safety. What this indicates, and what shall be applied to my analysis of its figurative use by the contemporary gothic subject, is the transgressive potential of pain inflicted upon the self.

Pain is a phenomenon with a social and cultural history. Elaine Scarry argues that pain both creates and destroys the self, as painful experiences produce the self at a time of

[10] Amelia Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1998) p. 13-14.

heightened awareness while the self also attempts to escape that pain.[11] Pain is a purely subjective experience: one may not experience another person's pain. Scarry also argues that an increased intensity of pain leads to a disintegration of language, which gives rise to a language of agency with which we describe pain – it is likened to other experiences, but it has no direct vocabulary of its own, we rely upon terms which have no fixed biological value but which are culturally as well as medically understood. In this context it becomes key to examine what vocabulary we are given through lyrical analysis, as indicators of the cultural understanding of pain. As seen above, we encounter a preponderance of words used to describe pain in a visceral fashion - ripping, tearing, ache, for example. We also see with some artists, such as Korn and Slipknot, that language dissolves entirely at moments of extreme pain, where lyrics dissolve into a scream, a shout, or non-lyrical verbalisation which is expressive without being descriptive. Thus mental anguish is described in terms of physical pain. Scarry argues that to have pain is to have certainty, but to hear about it is to have doubt – it is difficult to express one's pain to another and it is impossible for one individual to experience that same pain.[12] David Morris, drawing on Scarry's argument, asserts that we doubt the authenticity or truthfulness of pain which is related to us by another.[13] Morris describes pain as an 'archetype of subjectivity',[14] experienced only by the individual but also culturally interpreted. The contemporary gothic subject I believe engages in what Scarry calls 'analogical verification' or 'substantiation', whereby in response to a crisis of belief in an ideology or cultural construct, the 'sheer material factualness of the human body will be borrowed to lend that cultural construct the aura of "realness" and "certainty."'[15] In this case, the cultural construct which is in crisis is the subject. The subject can be re-established through the re-unification of mind and body, and pain, assessed as such, indicates reclamation of the self.

[11] Elaine Scarry, *The Body In Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985)
[12] Scarry, p. 13.
[13] David B. Morris, *The Culture of Pain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) p. 20.
[14] Morris, p. 14.
[15] Scarry, p. 14.

Central to this argument is that pain should be viewed as a perception rather than a sensation, an argument expounded by Morris, in response to modern epidemics such as chronic pain. Various advances in the field of Health Psychology have given support to the breakdown of the Cartesian body/mind split that has historically placed pain as an exclusively physical experience. Morris describes this split as the 'Myth of Two Pains', physical and mental, arguing that the division of pain into these two spheres is misleading. To view pain as a sensation ignores the awareness with which pain is apprehended and experienced. Morris' work *The Culture of Pain* explores pain as having a cultural history, with its relegation to the physical sphere as the legacy of 19th century medical understanding. He argues that this medical approach to pain, dominant until now, is fallacious in that it places a misleading emphasis upon nerve and tissue damage as the sole cause of pain, that is, that a schism is introduced between the mental and the physical such that denigrates the status of mental pain to the detriment of our understanding of the subject as a whole. Focusing on chronic pain as the silent or invisible epidemic of our time, he posits the crisis in medical understanding surrounding chronic pain conditions as a crisis in our understanding of pain itself: that its physical nature does not fully explain the patient's experience. The view of pain which sees it as solely a physical phenomenon is problematised by such issues as phantom limb pain, where tissue damage cannot account for the pain or sensation felt by the patient. The definition provided by the International Association for the Study of Pain in 1994 characterises pain as 'an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage.'[16] This illustrates the successful movement away from the exclusive understanding of pain in a biomedical framework towards one that incorporates psychological factors. The multi-disciplinary approach to the management of chronic pain is in this context an indicator of the developing psychosocial and cultural, as well as medical, understanding of pain in western society, and is also influential on our

[16] Harold Merskey and Nikolai Bogduk eds., *Classification of Chronic Pain: Descriptions of Chronic Pain Syndromes and Definitions of Pain Terms,* 2nd edn (Seattle: IASP Press, 1994) p. 210.

understanding of the subject in terms of mind / body dualism. Interestingly, both Morris and Roselyne Rey, another theorist of pain, argue for the usefulness of literary texts in the study of pain, not just for the manner in which they express what is, as we have established, notoriously difficult to express, but for the manner in which those texts may illustrate the social significance and representation of pain.[17] In Rey's terms, an understanding based on either emotion or sensation will not be satisfactory, one has to combine the two, while taking into consideration the fact that these things are generally thought to be separate. My overarching narrative here is the denial of the Cartesian body/mind division played out in this expression of pain, which encounters entrenched beliefs about the separation of body and mind. The experience of pain, because it is a perception and not just a sensation, critically questions the relationship between the body and mind and the influence of that relationship upon self-perception. In applying a model of pain not as a sensation but as a perception to the texts of Popular Metal lyrics and the experience of the individual presented therein, we are able to develop a model of subjectivity which depends upon the presence of the body even as it destroys it; a model defined in its entirety by the individual in crisis, and a model which incorporates pain into an understanding of subjectivity rather than denying it. In addition, those feelings of alienation and dissociation which are expressed through the idea of numbness, or hollowness, represent the desire to reconnect through sensation. The cultural and historical model of pain provided by the works of Morris and Rey in particular illustrate the significance of the shift in the cultural meaning of pain from one of religious experience, for example, where pain and suffering appear as a punishment for sin, to a biomedical model, in which they are a hindrance to human experience and must be eliminated. The cultural history of pain and bodily understanding presents to a certain extent a cultural history of the subject, insofar as we understand that subject to have a history which is inextricably linked to its embodiment. Pain as an experience encountered in lifestyle

[17] Roselyne Rey, *The History Of Pain* trans. by Louise Elliott Wallace, J. A. Cadden and S. W. Cadden. (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995)

activities and choices serves not only to explore the boundaries of the embodied subject but to contextualise experience and challenge ease and comfort.

Thematically, as may be observed in the lyrical sources, pain and suffering are key experiences for the production of the contemporary gothic subject. There are a number of activities associated with Popular Metal music and Alternative culture which are in the spectrum of what I call consensual violence – activities in which the participant engages in activities which may cause harm to oneself (or others, but primarily oneself), which are subject to a degree of social non-acceptance, a resistance which I believe to be associated with levels of acceptability concerning control of the body of the subject. To locate the body in this culture, and with specific regard to pain and control, I will now look at consensually violent crowd activities in live music settings, and the development of the individual 'body project' through practices of body modification. These forms of corporeal verification are subject to forms of control and surveillance, and contested definitions of harm, which produces such activities as powerful sites of resistance and self-determination. This next section marks a departure from my established methodology thus far, however I believe that there are specific benefits for doing so at this point. There is a potential danger in assuming that the analysis of lyrics produced by artists can be used to interpret the audience who consume them, namely the over-simplification of the patterns and values of consumption on the part of the fan. However, in discussing pain and the body, it seems to me that there is benefit in widening the scope of the inquiry here to explore an approach to subjectivity reflected in such prominent cultural phenomena as exist within this context. Body Modification, as a popular practice within Alternative culture, is a rich resource in the discussion of the 'body project', and crowd activity during live performance illustrates well the tensions that exist between differing values of pain, harm, control and safety. Furthermore, being that images of self-harm such as cutting appear in the lyrical sources examined here, it seems pertinent to link them to theories of

self-harming behaviour and also to briefly explore the appearance of such behaviours in the culture.

Body Modification

Tattooing and other forms of body modification have experienced a general surge in popularity in many sections of society since the last decades of the twentieth century, as noted by Victoria Pitts and Paul Sweetman.[18] Participation in these practices as a part of the 'body project' is particularly pronounced in Alternative culture, including that associated with Popular Metal, with many fans and artists being pierced and tattooed. Certain types of designs and piercings are explicitly connected to particular kinds of music or 'scenes', band logos or portraits of artists, for example, and off-centre lip piercings and earlobe expansion have become particularly associated with Emo, an aesthetic and musical style associated with bands such as My Chemical Romance. For the most part however body modification is associated with a style and aesthetic that identifies persons as 'Alternative', including both their clothing and hair colour. However this is by no means an homogeneous grouping, nor does it always indicate a consensus on the appropriateness of modifications, something which may be illustrated by the resistance from certain segments of the Alternative community to some forms of more extreme modification such as skin removal, branding and scarification. It is clear from my own experience that whilst the Alternative community is more geared toward acceptance of these practices as a form of self-expression, there remain stark divisions and disagreements concerning the acceptability of these extreme modifications, reflecting perhaps the diversity of the community and the tenacity of the 'Alternative' label. However, what has interested me with relation to the use of body modification practices in Alternative culture is not only the manner in which such practices relate to self-expression, but how these practices involve a negotiation of pain. Body Modification is a rich area within the study of the body,

[18] Pitts, *In The Flesh*. Paul Sweetman, 'Anchoring the (Postmodern) Self? Body Modification, Fashion and Identity.' *Body & Society*, 5:2-3 (1999), 51-76.

addressing issues of fashion and anti-fashion, primitivism and tribalism, the reclamation of the self and body as canvas, the mutilation debate, and issues of deviance, difference and rebellion. The work of Armando Favazza has been particularly influential in locating body modification as a cultural practice with a long history, and distancing such behaviour from alarmist associations with pathological self-harming behaviour.[19] Indeed, Favazza's work has also been influential in producing an historical understanding of self-harm distancing such behaviour from suicidal behaviour, which I shall go on to discuss. Victoria Pitts notes that the 'stigmatization of the tattoo allowed for it to become a mark of disaffection for groups who sought to stage symbolic rebellion and create a subcultural style, and, eventually, to create personal and political body art.'[20] I would extend this assessment of the tattoo to apply to the various forms of body modification visible within Alternative culture, however, the body is not only produced as a site of rebellion: it is a canvas, a commodity, and a site of surveillance and control. The modification of the body, in the practices which are now becoming more mainstream, positions the body as a legitimate site of the development and expression of subjectivity.

One of the most frequent questions asked particularly of tattoo artists by potential customers, and of those who have had work done by those who see it, pertains to the degree of pain involved in the process. This is largely an unanswerable question. Although there are physical aspects such as the placement of a tattoo (areas on the body such as the feet or the spine, where the bone is close to the skin, as oppose to the upper arm or stomach, are generally more painful areas) which affect the intensity of pain involved, these are by no means the only factors involved in the pain of tattooing. That pain is not an experience which can be understood within a purely biomedical framework is evidenced in the observations of those artists to whom I spoke. The role that pain plays for the individual choosing to modify their body is a complex one, it is not the sole basis upon

[19] See Armando R. Favazza, *Bodies Under Siege: Self-Mutilation and Body Modification in Culture and Society*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987)
[20] Pitts, *In The Flesh*, p. 5.

which most body modifications are undertaken, however it is a factor of that experience. The further significance of body modification as it appears within Alternative lifestyle choices is as a form of the 'body project'. In interview with Natasha Scharf for Metal Hammer TV concerning her tattoos, Tairrie B describes her tattoos as meaningful, spiritual and personal, and expresses confusion at the lack of consideration an ex-member of her band gave her body art (this should, of course, be contextualised by the acrimonious nature of that band member's departure), describes how she encourages fans to think before getting tattoos, and emphasises the importance she places on her body.[21]

Furthermore, body modification politicises the body/self with regard to biomedical understanding of the body, and pathology is again raised as an issue. Victoria Pitts investigated the links that are drawn by popular media between body modification and self-injury practices in a survey of a sample of thirty-five newspaper articles from mainstream British and American newspapers during the five years previous to the publication of her article 'Body Modification, Self-Mutilation and Agency in Media Accounts of a Subculture.'[22] In seventeen of those articles she identified what she called the 'mutilation debate', where a link is made between the psychological motivations common to self-injury and that supposed to occur with body modification practices. Stories about body modification rely for their newsworthiness upon the ability to locate those stories as horror stories or cautionary tales, presenting mental health professionals as experts upon body modification, as oppose to experienced body piercers or tattoo artists. The use of these professionals presents the experience of body modification within the classificatory system of mental health and a biomedical framework, often in the context as to whether or not these practices constitute self-injury which is indicative of mental illness. The mutilation debate pathologises body modification and establishes a vocabulary attendant to this pathologisation. The use of this debate brings into question the agency of

[21] Tairrie B in interview with Natasha Scharf for *Metal Hammer TV*, June 13th, 2008. <http://youtube.com/watch?v=kVj8jiSVeSc> accessed June 2008.
[22] Pitts 'Body Modification'.

the subject who undertakes these modifications. In this manner the legitimacy of the body modification as an expression of subjectivity is called into question. It is an example of Foucauldian biopolitics, and the influence of the disciplines, particularly that of medicine, in defining our bodies. The body here is produced in the context of a discourse of mental health, not with reference to expression or fashion, as can be seen in other assessments of body modification culture such as those undertaken by Favazza, for example. It is not only to undergo pain, but also to permanently or semi-permanently change the body that arouses suspicion. The mutilation debate places the subject in a position of reduced agency, however I would argue that this usage is misleading and inaccurate. As we have seen, the decision to undertake a body modification of any of its various forms can be seen to be indicative of an expression of subjectivity which enacts control over the body on the part of the subject. The pain-aspect of these practices remains much of a mystery to outsiders, and although it is of concern to insiders, it is by no means a central aspect. This shift in emphasis suggests to me that the perception of pain is experienced differently along that boundary, and opens up an avenue for investigation which suggests that the experience of pain is a key concept in understanding the formation of subjectivity: in which pain may be negotiated rather than overtly avoided. With relation to the contemporary gothic subject, we may begin to see links back to the relationship between subjectivity and trauma. In those narratives of the subject in which emotional pain was experienced, that pain could be seen as a necessary process. Here I would also link forward to the misconception that the pain involved in self-harming practices is associated with an impulse toward suicide: rather that these practices exist as life-affirming coping mechanisms. In each of these instances, in varying ways, pain and the body are central to the production of subjectivity.

The Live Gig: Bodies Under Surveillance & Consensual Violence

Where the mutilation debate places the subject in a position of reduced agency with regard to body modification, discourses of risk and harm enact a similar technique of

control in the live gig setting. The live performance is a central tenet of the culture surrounding Popular Metal, both in terms of the authenticity of the artist and as a cultural phenomenon and site of socialisation: the live gig is a chance for the artist to prove their worth to the audience, and also provides the opportunity for proximity and community with their fans.[23] For the purposes of this chapter and this section I shall focus upon crowd activity at the live gig in terms of consensual violence, and these instances of consensual violence as reflective of corporeal verification in Alternative culture in the wider sense. In particular, the mosh pit, and other phenomena such as crowd surfing and head running can be positioned as examples of consensually and non-consensually violent activities almost unique to the live Metal performance, and which further illustrate the role of the body in Alternative culture. The live event is also a key example of the body under surveillance in terms of event organisation and crowd management. High-risk audience behaviour such as crowd surfing, moshing, mosh pits, head running, and the 'wall of death' are all primarily associated with Metal and its various subgenres. Of the acts whose work I have studied here, not all of these activities will be observable at instances of their gigs, and crowd surfing is popular across many Rock genres, however I mention them because they are closely associated with the Metal genre in particular, and because the approach to body politics which they engender are very much appropriate to the experience of subjectivity and the body which I have thus far explored. Several high profile incidents influenced the development of industry best practice, such that Popular Metal artists are increasingly aware of issues of crowd safety. The increased prominence of safety at gigs has come about in response to these high profile cases, which are largely concerned with Rock and Metal gigs.[24] Of all the types of crowd activity I listed above, the mosh pit is perhaps the

[23] The continued importance of the live experience to rock music, and its authenticating effects, are explored in Philip Auslander's *Liveness: Performance In A Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999)

[24] These include Guns n Roses at Donnington in 1988 where two fans were crushed, Woodstock '99, where an unhappy crowd revolted in mass rioting, firesetting and destruction of property, Pearl Jam at the Roskilde festival in 2000, where fans slipped underfoot and nine were trampled, The Big Day Out in Sydney in 2001 where a girl was crushed and died during Limp Bizkit's set. In addition, the relatively new introduction of all ages or 14+ gigs (as oppose to 18+, as was the case until a few years ago) poses particular challenges event organisers due to the physical vulnerability of this age group.

only example of consensual violence. Crowd surfing poses dangers to those below the surfer who have not consented to participate in that activity, the wall of death (where the crowd parts and then runs toward one another) may pose difficulty to crowd members unable to move away from the area, and head running, where an audience member runs across the heads of the crowd beneath, is subject to the same difficulty in consent as crowd surfing. Indeed, in my experience and research of crowd surfing and head running on message boards associated with Alternative culture, these two activities invoke a stark division of opinion as to their acceptability. The mosh pit is a fundamentally different experience, being a circle of participants who run at each other, purposely bang into each other, known as slam dancing, engaging in playful acts of violence which may result in injury but which has a general code of etiquette concerning the well-being of participants.

The moshpit does not emerge as a distinct object of study, rather it is referenced as a distinctive phenomenon within various disciplines. The most comprehensive investigation of the mosh pit that I have found is in Joe Ambrose's *The Violent World Of Moshpit Culture*, an account of participant observation in a wide variety of pits, where the author addresses aspects of community but also importantly violence in the mosh pit setting, presenting an insider's view of the pit which challenges those accounts of the moshpit which emphasise the need for stricter control or elimination.[25] In literature concerning emergency medicine and event planning, the mosh pit appears in relation to the potential for injuries sustained in that environment, and in common with the literature produced by the crowd management industry is produced as an area of concern for assessment with regard to risk management.[26] From my own experience of the live music industry in Scotland over the past decade I have seen a measured change in the attitudes

[25] Joe Ambose, *The Violent World of Moshpit Culture* (London: Omnibus Press, 2001)
[26] See for example Timothy Janchar, Chris Samaddar and David Milzman, 'The Mosh Pit Experience: Emergency Medical Care for Concert Injuries', *The American Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 18:1 (2000), 62-63, Jeff T. Grange, Steve M. Green and Warren Downs, 'Concert Medicine: Spectrum of Medical Problems Encountered at 405 Major Concerts', *Academic Emergency Medicine* 6:3 (1999), 202-207, Andrew M. Milsten et al., 'Variables Influencing Medical Usage Rates, Injury Patterns, and Levels of Care for Mass Gatherings', *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* 18:4 (2003), 334-346, and the UK standard of best practice, known as the 'purple guide', *The Event Safety Guide: A Guide to Health, Safety and Welfare at Music and Similar Events*, HSE Books, 1999.

toward crowd management and safety, with a stronger emphasis now placed upon the discouragement of such activities due to the risk of injury to patrons, and resulting legal action against the event organisers.

The moshpit has been approached in relation to its roots in Punk, in terms of dance,[27] in terms of the influence of the situationist international upon Punk,[28] in terms of gender politics in the pit,[29] and in terms of social behaviour, focusing on safety and risk in light of the riots at Woodstock 1999.[30] In other areas the mosh pit is described as 'playful violence'[31] where the consensual nature of participation is emphasised. From my own observation of a large number and variety of concerts at which mosh pits have occurred, I have noted the general lack of female participants. It was not uncommon for bands associated with the Riot Grrl movement during the 1980s to demand that the crowd allowed more females to come to the front or to be involved in mosh pits. In some cases the mosh pit (as a spatial area rather than a phenomenon) has been produced as a site of risk specific to females: the reports of rapes in the pit at Big Day Out and Woodstock '99, for example. It is unclear from these reports of sexual assault if they occurred in the midst of an actual pit, or in the area of the crowd associated with the pit. What the reporting of these alleged assaults very clearly does is to produce the pit as an unmanaged environment of excess in which aggressive and violent masculinity becomes a threat: an assessment which is markedly different from those analyses based upon participant observation which describe the pit as an internally structured physical phenomenon with a strict etiquette of communal care. As a form of consensual violence, the mosh pit phenomenon raises many

[27] Bradford Scott Simon, 'Entering The Pit: Slam Dancing and Modernity', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 31:1 (1997), 149-176.
[28] Neil Nehring, 'The situationist international in American Hardcore Punk, 1982-2002', *Popular Music and Society*, 29:5 (2006), 519-530
[29] Ann Cvetkovitch, 'Witnessing Things', *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 4:4 (2003) 353-362 and Sue Grand 'Unsexed and Ungendered Bodies: The Violated Self', *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 4:4 (2003), 313 – 341.
[30] Brad H. Reddick & Eugene V. Beresin, 'Rebellious Rhapsody: Metal, Rap, Community, and Individuation' *Academic Psychiatry*, 26:1 (2002) 51-59, and Stephen Vider, 'Rethinking Crowd Violence: Self-Categorization Theory and the Woodstock 1999 Riot', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 34:2 (2004), 141-166.
[31] Stephen J. Epstein, 'Anarchy in the UK, Solidarity in the ROK: Punk Rock comes to Korea', *Acta Koreana* 3 (2000) 1-31, p. 5.

questions in terms of corporeal verification. The statutory obligation of the venue and event organiser in terms of duty of care can be seen to clash with the fan's ownership of their body and ability to consent to a violent activity. Within this conflict, the body of the fan becomes a contested site of signification and surveillance. Although the likelihood of injury is high, it is common for participants to consider these injuries as badges of honour, signs of endurance, from which they may derive subcultural capital.

Self-Harm and Parasuicidal Behaviour

An addition type of activity which may be read as an act of corporeal verification is deliberate self-harm. Acts of deliberate self-harm such as cutting have increasingly been associated with fans of Popular Metal, and represent a much more controversial form of corporeal verification than the types of body modification. During the period of study at hand self-harm became more visible in Alternative culture, as well as being figured lyrically, and elements of the mainstream media have associated deliberate self-harm particularly with certain parts of Alternative culture. The prevalence of deliberate self-harm and attempted suicide in the Goth subculture was the subject of a study published in April 2006,[32] in response in part to these connections being made in the mainstream media, and concluded that those within the study who self-identified as Goth did have a higher rate of lifetime self-harm and attempted suicide. (It should be noted that the category of Emo, which has recently been the subject of a moral panic in both America and Britain, accused of glorifying self-harm, emerged too late to be included in the list of possible subcultural identification.) While identification with other subcultural categories (particularly 'Punk' and 'Mosher') did also indicate the prevalence of lifetime self-harm, no causal link could be established between the two factors, and indeed it was suggested that 'it could be explained by selection, with young people with a particular propensity to

[32] Robert Young, Helen Sweeting and Patrick West, 'Prevalence of deliberate self harm and attempted suicide within contemporary Goth youth subculture: longitudinal cohort study', *BMJ* 332 (2006), 1058-1061.

self harm being attracted to the subculture.'[33] In a more muted fashion, the razor blade can be found as a motif in jewellery, album design, clothing, and as part of a reparatory of design images across Alternative culture, particularly with Popular Metal – along with stars, skulls and flames, for example.

Within the field of psychology, various models for the interpretation of self-harming behaviour have been suggested. In order to contextualise the discussion of abjection and its relation to self-harm which will follow, it is important here to offer an outline of these theories and their significance. The study carried out by Young, Sweeting and West characterised it as 'a maladaptive coping strategy intended to relieve negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, frustration, or guilt. It is usually unrelated to an immediate suicide attempt.'[34] While this description is pertinent, it is important to explore what is understood to be self-harm as I have used the term here in relation to other aspects of bodily activity and self-mutilation. The issue of self-harm has attracted increased attention within the medical and psychological community in recent years, particularly with regard to youth and adolescents.[35] Within this literature self-harm, self-injury or self-mutilation is largely characterised as the deliberate damage or alteration of body tissue from which suicidal intent is absent. A. L. Chapman *et al* explicitly note that '[i]n contrast with suicidal behavior, DSH is a form of parasuicidal behavior that involves *no intent to die*.'[36] Their model of experiential avoidance is specifically based upon the premise 'that DSH is a negatively reinforced strategy for reducing or terminating unwanted emotional

[33] Young, Sweeting and West, p. 1060.
[34] Young, Sweeting and West, p. 1058.
[35] See, for example, M. Z. Brown, K. A. Comtois, & M. M. Linehan, 'Reasons for suicide attempts and nonsuicidal self-injury in women with borderline personality disorder', *Journal of Abnormal Psychology,* 111 (2002): 198-202., A. R. Favazza, 'The coming of age of self-mutilation', *Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases*, 186 (1998): 259-268, K.L. Gratz, S. D. Conrad & L. Roemer, 'Risk factors for deliberate self-harm among college students, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 72 (2002):128-140, M. K. Nock & M. J. Prinstein, 'A Functional approach to the assessment of self-mutilative behavior', *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology*, 72 (2004): 885-890, Alexander L. Chapman, Kim L. Gratz & Milton Z. Brown, 'Solving the puzzle of deliberate self-harm: The experiential avoidance model', *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 44 (2006): 371-394, A. Simpson, 'Can mainstream health services provide meaningful care for people who self-harm? A critical reflection', *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 13 (2006): 429-436, J. V. Penn, C. L. Esposito, L. E. Schaeffer, G. K. Fritz A. Spirito, 'Suicide attempts and self-mutilative behavior in a juvenile correctional facility', *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry,* 42 (2003):762-769
[36] Chapman et al, p. 373. Italics in original. DSH is abbreviation of Deliberate Self Harm.

arousal.'[37] The reasons for self-harming may include to stop bad feelings, to feel something, or to punish oneself, however, across this literature, deliberate self-harm is recognised to be a coping mechanism that provides relief from unwanted emotional states.[38]

Sharon Klayman Farber proposes a spectrum of self-mutilation, which relates closely to my interpretation of corporeal verification and consensual violence used in this chapter. [39] The spectrum of self-mutilation or bodily self-harm she describes includes body modification, mutilating surgery, extreme dieting behaviour, overeating, anorectic behaviour, drug abuse, and also activities not usually associated with self-mutilation such as compulsive shopping and gambling. Linking the control of the body to the control of the self she also suggests that activities such as nail biting, picking at skin and pimples, and picking at scabs could be placed within this theoretical framework. Farber's definition of self-mutilation, encompassing this wide spectrum of activity, requires that one not make assumptions concerning intent: 'It is preferable to describe it descriptively as the infliction of injury upon one's body that results in tissue damage or alteration'[40], in contrast to those other recently established definitions referenced above which characterise self-mutilation in opposition to suicidal activity, that is, as the non-lethal infliction of injury upon the body. It is also important to recognise that activities such as body modification, while they fall under the spectrum of self-mutilation or consensual violence, do differ as to the intent of the person who undertakes these activities, and that a person who engages in body modification does not necessarily share psychological motivation with a person who engages in cutting. With specific regard to feelings of self-hate or punishment, these behaviours remain distinct. Farber's theory situates the self-mutilating subject as existing

[37] Chapman et al, p. 372.
[38] Despite this acknowledgement in recent literature, there remains a noted discomfort in the response of health care professionals when treating persons who self-harm, and negative attitudes towards those persons. For a fuller investigation of this see Nadine Mackay and Christine Barrowclough, 'Accident and emergency staff's perceptions of deliberate self-harm: Attributions, emotions and willingness to help', *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 44 (2005), p. 255-267.
[39] Sharon Klayman Farber, *When The Body Is The Target: Self-harm, Pain, and Traumatic Attachments*. (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield, 2000)
[40] Farber, p. 19.

within a borderland, and makes clear that the boundary between the self and other is '[a] transitional area of experience…between the inside of the self and what is outside the self, between that which is normal and that which is pathological…the skin is the body's edge.'[41] The act of self-mutilation (in all its forms) engages with this borderland, and any act upon the body's edge can be situated as an exploration of the differentiation between self and other.[42] Certainly in the manner in which we see it reflected in the lyrical examples above, with reference to the contemporary gothic subject, we may read self-harm as a method of control through release, and a form of maintaining the boundaries of the subject through the use of the physical.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the body as a key site of identity formation for the contemporary gothic subject, and suggested the term 'corporeal verification' to describe the process whereby the body and the physical are used to provide certainty in subject formation, where the subject's sense of self can in many cases be seen to have been undermined by a sense of crisis. In examining themes of pain, numbness and violence in the lyrics of key artists of the period I have illustrated how this model works to denote emotional trauma, and how pain is used to underscore the seriousness of such emotional trauma. I have suggested the importance of dominant discourses of safety, harm and risk, and shown how these resonate in other areas of Popular Metal and Alternative culture using a theory of consensual violence. I shall now go on to examine the role that the grotesque and the monstrous play for the contemporary gothic subject, in contextualising the sense of self as an outsider.

[41] Farber, p. 90.
[42] For other works on the exploration of the skin as significant territory, see Halberstam (1995), Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey ed., *Thinking Through the Skin.* (London: Routledge, 2001) and Steven Connor, *The Book Of Skin*. (London: Reaktion, 2004)

Chapter Three

The Grotesque, The Monstrous, and the Self as Other

The world of the contemporary gothic subject is a world of the grotesque. Concerned with the liminal and the boundary, this world is portrayed as distorted and strange. It is concerned with fear and terror, the disruption of convention, and the critique of normality. Within this context, the subject's experience is one characterised by elements of that grotesquery contained within itself – he or she may be described as ugly, deformed, or broken. They may be diseased or sick, and their mental state is often described as confused or as being in some way correlated with madness or insanity. However, in an act of critique of normality, it is possible for these aspects to be positively reclaimed and used to build an identity which is based upon otherness and difference. This chapter will explore the positioning of the contemporary gothic subject as an outsider through elements of the monstrous and the grotesque. The subject is repeatedly portrayed as being in some way different or alienated from others: through tropes of sickness and disease, references to hollowness, mental instability or explicitly as a freak or monster. We are confronted by issues of identity and the confusion of the categories of self and other, where the subject self-identifies as monstrous and subverts those categories and labels with varying levels of success and clarity. I suggest here that this can be read as a continuation of the tradition of the gothic monster, with particular reference to the development of that tradition in contemporary gothic, where the monster is produced as a site of identification and sympathy, and the moral certainty which underpins the categorisation of the good and the pure is undermined. I would argue that there is for the contemporary gothic subject an ambiguity concerning identity, a sense of being caught between the categories of the normal and the grotesque, of self and other. The distinction between the two – as the binary opposition upon which historical theories of the subject are built – can be seen to be broken down; this erosion of certainty indicative of an unresolved

crisis of subjectivity which feeds into the generalised and pervasive sense of crisis to which I have made reference.

Any discussion of outsider status for the contemporary gothic subject should begin by noting the manner in which Popular Metal depends upon a more general process of othering from what is perceived as normal or mainstream culture. We find throughout the work of the artists under discussion here expressions of otherness and difference in which they acknowledge their outsider status. These vary from artist to artist, for example, in Slipknot's 'My Plague' from *IOWA*: 'I'm just a bastard but at least I admit it', in Nine Inch Nails' 'We're In This Together' from *The Fragile*:

> You and me
> We're in this together now
> None of them can stop us now
> We will make it through somehow…
> …Well they've got to kill what we've found
> Well they've got to hate what they fear
> Well they've got to make it go away
> Well they've got to make it disappear

In Marilyn Manson's 'Use Your Fist And Not Your Mouth' from *The Golden Age Of Grotesque*: 'My hate pop won't ever stop / I'm fucking glad I'm different / This is my hate American style kick', in Korn's 'Children Of The Korn' from *Follow The Leader*: 'Look and see, I feel the parents hating me' and in Tura Satana's 'Sickness' from *All Is Not Well*: 'I am the scar that will not heal that's passed from girl to girl / I am that little bitch you fear because I am not afraid / I'm everything that is real while you know you're just a fake'. This kind of othering has historical resonance. For example, Leslie Fielder, in *Freaks* explores the appropriation of the term 'freak' as an 'honorific title' by hippie subculture to express dissident subjectivity.[1] He situates the term's original usage as within the community of circus freakery, 'a badge of shame, a reminder of their long exclusion and

[1] Leslie Fielder, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978)

exploitation by other humans, who defining them thus have by the same token defined themselves as "normal"'.[2] He posits that the choice of this moniker by the hippie subculture indicates a 'radical alteration of consciousness',[3] one which revels in the kind of monstrosity the term confers upon them. Despite Fielder's obvious disdain for the hippie subculture, this usage of the term is particularly useful for contextualising the contemporary gothic subject's use of outsider status. In defining oneself as a freak or an outsider, monstrosity is situated as a given factor of subjectivity, but one which reflects negatively upon 'normal' society.

The Gothic Monster

The monster is fundamentally that which is other: that which threatens the normal. It is that which must be cast out – made abject – in order to preserve that sense of normality. Although the figure of the monster is that against which one may define self and subjectivity, this self and subjectivity find themselves under threat in a new way, in a new era of monsters, in which the resolution is less simple. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen maintains that *fin de siècle* America was a time of monsters, preoccupied with monstrosity, the manifestation of a cultural anxiety motivated by an 'ambient fear',[4] recalling the social and cultural anxiety dominating Ulrich Beck's theorisation of risk society, in which new fears and dangers pertaining to global apocalypse raise awareness as to the lived reality of the subject within contemporary society, and the 'low-level fear' Brian Massumi characterises as 'background radiation saturating existence.'[5] The function of the monster within the gothic is primarily to define what is 'normal' through the presentation of the 'monster' as that which is different to the norm. Monsters exist as warnings against the transgression of social boundaries, in which the self may become other. The primary focus

[2] Fielder, p. 13.
[3] Fielder, p. 14.
[4] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen ed., *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. (Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. viii.
[5] Brian Massumi, 'Everywhere You Want To Be', in Brian Massumi ed., *The Politics Of Everyday Fear*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 3 – 37.

of the next section is the loosening of the boundary between self and other as represented by the development of the monster from malevolent other to site of identification and sympathy. This progression is represented at its extreme by the re-location of the monster to the human in what Judith Halberstam describes as postmodern gothic, where the monster is 'already inside…and works its way out. Accordingly, it is the human, the façade of the normal, that tends to become the place of terror within postmodern Gothic.'[6] In the contemporary period the distinction between self and other breaks down to such an extent that the other cannot be sufficiently separated from the self: the monster cannot be banished. I follow Halberstam in arguing that monstrosity as a contemporary category reflects back upon the subject as 'at least partially monstrous' and that within contemporary gothic (such is my preferred term in place of 'postmodern' gothic), there is a suspicion of 'monster hunters, monster makers, and above all, discourses invested in purity and innocence.'[7] With respect to the contemporary gothic subject, the dominant discourse of 'purity and innocence' is that of Christianity, the moral certitude of which comes under criticism in the work of Nine Inch Nails, My Ruin, and Marilyn Manson in particular. It might also be suggested that the discourse of innocence which pertains to children is challenged, upon which I will expand in the next chapter.

Cohen puts forward seven theses of the monster.[8] Firstly, he suggests that the monster is always a specific cultural and historical form, that 'The Monster's Body is a Cultural Body', that the monster is an embodiment of a particular socio-historical set of anxieties. The second thesis is the assertion that 'The Monster Always Escapes': that although the same monster may appear at different historical moments, it has a different significance in each of these times. Thesis three, 'The Monster Is The Harbinger of Category Crisis': the monster is dangerous because it refuses easy categorisation, and as a sometimes disturbing hybrid it contests the boundaries of distinction and of cultural space.

[6] Halberstam, p. 162.
[7] Halberstam, p.27.
[8] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, p. 3-25.

Thesis four, 'The Monster Dwells at the Gates of Difference': that is, that the monster can be a cultural or gendered other, actions against which are justified by their being made monstrous. This has particular reference for the monstrous feminine, for example, or for the manner in which the figure of the Jew was made monstrous in order to justify anti-Semitic behaviour and attitudes. Thesis five, 'The Monster Polices the Borders of the Possible': the monster acts as a warning from the boundaries of the limits of knowledge and knowing, it acts as a deterrent against certain types of activity. Thesis six, 'Fear of the Monster is Really a Kind of Desire': this is perhaps the most interesting in terms of what has been discussed with regard to the abject. Cohen maintains that the monster is a source of ambiguity and ambivalence, that at the same time as we experience fear we are also envious of the freedom it represents, that the monster 'is the abjected fragment that enables the formation of all kinds of identities.'[9] The monster presents us with the possibilities of transformation. Finally, thesis seven, 'The Monster Stands at the Threshold of Becoming': the monster, as a creation of a particular socio-historical moment, presents us with the question of its own creation; it acts as a signpost to the fear and desire that brought about its inception. What Cohen's breakdown of the significance of the monster makes most clear is the echo of the normal existing within the abnormal. The monster, particularly with regard to its significance within gothic texts, is a fertile ground for interpretation. Furthermore, the categorisation of the monstrous is an embodiment of the need to define the boundaries and politics of the normal. Judith Halberstam positions gothic fiction as a technology of subjectivity, 'which produces the deviant subjectivities opposite to which the normal, the healthy, and the pure can be known.'[10] The category of the deviant requires the category of the normal in which to be opposed, from which to deviate. Following from this, I would suggest that within the contemporary gothic subject's world, the relationship between self and other is loosened so that the self takes on the qualities of deviance and monstrosity sometimes ascribed to the other.

[9] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, p. 19.
[10] Halberstam, p. 2.

There has been, throughout its development, a shift in perspective in writing upon the monster. Mary Shelley's monster may be one of the first examples of a monster with whom we feel sympathy, and indeed this presentation of the monster as a site of identification and increased ambiguity is perhaps characteristic of its development at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries – Louis de Pointe du Lac in *Interview With The Vampire*, for example. Judith Halberstam, Fred Botting, David Punter and Glennis Byron have all suggested this shift in the status of the monster,[11] and Botting maintains that the excluded monster is 'rendered more humane'[12] while the systems that exclude the monster are presented as 'terrifying' and 'persecutory'. Punter and Byron suggest that this shift in identification is most disturbing with regard to the serial killer, the monster which dominates the end of the twentieth century, and while we do not directly sympathise with that figure, there is a great deal of ambiguity with regard to their presentation.[13] It is, however, Halberstam's examination of monsters which shall perhaps provide the most insightful approach to this shift in identification. There is a degree of comfort present in the identification of the monster: a peace of mind that comes about through the safe categorisation of evil. In Halberstam's study of the bodily manifestations of monstrosity, she suggests that this embodiment of evil in the monster is a source of comfort, that monsters, relegated to a specific bodily location, thus encircle the presence of evil in society and prevent it from being generalised across a social or cultural milieu. However, the conditions of modernity do not allow this convenient encirclement:

> …modernity has eliminated the comfort of monsters because we have seen, in Nazi Germany and elsewhere, that evil works often as a system, it works through institutions and it works as a *banal* (meaning "common to all") mechanism…evil stretches across cultural and political productions as complicity and collaboration

[11] David Punter and Glennis Byron, *The Gothic*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), Fred Botting, 'Aftergothic: Consumption, Machines, and Black Holes' in Jerrold E. Hogle (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp. 277-300.
[12] Botting, inHogle ed., p. 286.
[13] Punter and Byron, p. 265.

> and it manifests itself as a seamless norm rather than as some monstrous disruption.[14]

The defining binary opposition of good and evil is transferable to self and other, to 'normal' and 'monstrous'. It is this opposition upon which self-identity has historically been constructed. However, if those boundaries cannot be properly maintained, if the questions we pose concerning the inception of the monster lead us back again too close to ourselves, the basis upon which we define ourselves begins to collapse.

The Contemporary Gothic Subject as Monstrous

There are multiple ways in which the subject is produced as an outsider in the work of the artists at hand here. Those that occur most commonly are: references to mental instability or forms of madness, in which the boundary between the self and other is questioned; references to sickness and disease, which function to express the subject's sense of alienation and difference; and explicit references to being different or a freak, sometimes expressed through images of physical deformity. In the work of Korn, outsider status is linked to experiences of childhood bullying, and the idea of being a freak is linked to ideas of gender and sexuality. For Slipknot, the idea of the monstrous is linked to the notion of a generation betrayed by their parents, and notions of the bodily grotesque are positively reclaimed and used to reinforce a desire for power and revenge. For My Ruin and Tura Satana, Tairrie B's lyrics reveal an otherness already felt at the level of gender, and in her relationship with Christian mythology and symbolism, in her identification as a 'Blasphemous Girl'. Nine Inch Nails also use a great deal of religious imagery, in which the subject is alienated from Christianity but whose sense of identity is still bound by its rhetoric. All of these artists at various points describe themselves as damaged, or broken, or in terms of the failure to live up to expectation. The Korn song 'Wake Up Hate' from *Untouchables* is comprised mostly of expressions of nihilism and a desire for violence:

[14] Halberstam, p. 162.

We got a fucked up reason to live
Who really gives a fuck
We're gonna wake up hate
We're gonna fuck you up

However, the (by now familiar) relationship between vulnerability and violence is expressed with reference to an intense feeling of self-loathing:

I am the burden of my everything
And of its scar
I'll be reborn in hatred
Feeling I can't love no more…
…I'm, I'm filthy
Wasted piece of shit
I am disgusting
Take me away

The expression here of the self as abject is repeated elsewhere in their work with reference to the self as 'dirty', as in the song of the same name from *Issues*. Here Davis says that he 'feel(s) like a whore / a dirty whore', expressly linking vulnerability and self hate to the monstrous feminine. Gender and sexuality are important themes for the discussion of monstrosity in Korn's work, with Davis having been bullied about his appearance when he was younger. The song 'Faget'(sic), from *Korn*, deals with this issue directly:

Here I am different in this normal world…
…I am ugly, please just go away…
…I'm just a pretty boy, whatever you call it
You wouldn't know a real man if you saw it
…To all the people that think I'm strange
That I should be out of here locked up in a cage
You don't know what the hell is up now anyway
You got this pretty boy feeling like I'm enslaved

To a world that never appreciated shit
You can suck my dick and fucking like it…
…I'm just a pretty boy, I'm not supposed to fuck a girl
I'm just a pretty boy, living in this fucked up world

There are two issues here that I will take up. Firstly, the sense that the singer has been ostracised and treated as monstrous – the reference to being locked in a cage is reminiscent of the idea of a circus freak – and secondly, the expression of a dominant and ultimately heteronormative masculinity which borders on violence. Elsewhere in their work there are references to anal sex which would perhaps function to queer the singer, but that they are used in a context in which the singer presents himself as a caricature. Thus, although the singer clearly plays with references to himself which infer homosexuality or gender confusion, the expression of violent and dominant masculinity elsewhere clearly reasserts the heteronormative in this context. Perhaps the most prominent use of the 'freak' label in Korn's work is the song 'Freak on a Leash' from the album *Follow The Leader*. In this song Davis expresses frustration and a sense of victimisation at the hands of an unseen and undefined other. The 'freak' label here, and elsewhere on the same album ('In the past I was known as a freak / Had no friends, picked on 'cause I was weak' in 'Reclaim My Place', 'Like some goddamned fucking freak / I'm so pressured I'm so weak' in 'Seed') is associated with weakness and vulnerability:

Something takes a part of me
Something lost and never seen
Every time I start to believe
Something's raped and taken from me, from me…
…Feeling like a freak on a leash
Feeling like I have no release
How many times have I felt diseased?
Nothing in my life is free, is free

Although this vulnerability is countered by the expression of dominance through sex and the dehumanisation of the female other ('You and I were meant to be / A cheap fuck for me to lay') the legacy of being labelled a freak is never properly resolved. The phrase 'throw me away' is used with reference to self-loathing in 'Faget', but then is repeated in with reference to groupies ('these little girls') in 'Trash', from *Issues*:

> I see the flesh and it smells fresh
> And it's just there for the taking...
> …I tell my lies and I despise
> Every second I'm with you
> So I run away
> But still you stay
> So what the fuck is with you?
> Your feelings I can't help but rape them
> I'm sorry, I don't feel the same
> My heart inside is constantly hating
> I'm sorry, I just throw you away.

The animalistic nature of the first two lines quoted here function to dehumanise both the singer and the object of his lust: the use of 'throw you away' and the figurative use of 'rape' is telling in that it refers to the lack of self-worth that the singer has expressed elsewhere. Here then it may be suggested that Davis identifies both with the feminised subject position, and particularly the sense of weakness and vulnerability with which he associates it, and the unseen other or oppressive force whose victim he is.

There is an emphasis in Slipknot's work upon the physical elements of the monstrous and grotesque. (Most strikingly, this is figured through their use of carnivalesque-grotesque masks in performance and other public appearances.) They also place considerable emphasis upon the themes of disease and infection, insanity, and upon the awareness of being an outsider. In common with Korn there are references to being 'ugly', but here the reference is reclaimed for the benefit of the artist, for example in 'I Am

Hated' from *IOWA*: 'Now I'm not pretty and I'm not cool / But I'm fat and I'm ugly and proud – so fuck you'. There are also references to a more demonic physical appearance, such as in 'Wait and Bleed' from *Slipknot*: 'My eyes are red and gold, the hair is standing straight up / This is not the way I pictured me / I can't control my shakes'. Ideas of choosing 'evil' over 'good' in such songs as 'The Heretic Anthem' from *IOWA* are reminiscent of the use of occult and demonic imagery in Heavy Metal:

> I'm a pop star threat and I'm not dead yet
> Got a super dred bet with an angel drug head
> Like a dead beat winner, I want to be a sinner
> An idolised bang for the industry killer
> A hideous man that you don't understand
> Throw a suicide party and I'm guaranteed to fucking snap
> It's evilsonic, it's pornoholic
> Breakdowns, obscenities, it's all I wanna be

In 'People = Shit' from the same album the singer declares that he is 'sitting at the side of Satan', in 'I Am Hated', again from the same album, 'The whole world is my enemy and I'm a walking target / Two times the devil with all the significance', and in 'Pulse of the Maggots' from *Subliminal Verses* the band are described as 'the new diabolic'. Robert Walser, (1993) used the issue of madness and the appropriation of horror and occult images by Heavy Metal musicians and texts to examine attempts at censorship of Heavy Metal and what he saw as the absurdity of a causative link between that music and suicide, arguing instead that Heavy Metal's usage of these themes and images, like that of Bach, is to 'comprehend and critique the world'[15]. Walser explored the link between Heavy Metal and deviance as one of intended shock and knowing appropriation of images in a postmodern era, and to evoke the devil in order to shock those for whom such an image holds resonance. The use of the devil and the demonic in the quotes above clearly subscribes to a similar notion of appropriation of those images for their symbolic power.

[15] Walser, p. 170.

Whereas Korn's lyrics are sometimes tinged with a nostalgia for acceptance, Slipknot's work is not – although it does draw on the idea of a community of similarly alienated youth, which I shall explore in the next chapter. The subject here builds upon the subject position of outsider with particular aggression, turning that aggression both back upon himself and outward at the alienating force, for example, to return to 'My Plague', from *IOWA*:

> I don't mind being ogled, ridiculed
> Made to feel miniscule
> If you consider the source, it's kinda pitiful…
> …I know why you blame me (yourself)
> I know why you plague me (yourself)
> I'm turning it around like a knife in the shell
> I wanna understand why, but I'm hurting myself…

This excerpt clearly shows the self-awareness inherent in the outsider subject position that has been taken on. The song 'Three Nil' from *Subliminal Verses* illustrates the relationship between self-doubt and the confidence of aggression, and also the perceived relationship between singer and audience:

> Chaos, it's just the beginning
> Every promise I made I'm rescinding
> Centre mass in the middle of the monster
> I'm getting tired of drowning the constant
> Cry for help, it's debatable
> The only reason that you love me is I'm hated by all
> Come on, come see dysfunction…
> …Holed up, scarred, and tamed for the hell of it…
> …I am the pariah (break me)
> I am the liar (save me)
> I can take anything (make me)
> Accuse me of everything (take me)
> Cut off the system (shape me)

Deny my existence (waste me)
I won't be afraid (try me)
I won't be unmade (deny me)

The line 'come see dysfunction' echoes the line 'come see the idiot right here' from 'People = Shit', and as in that song is a challenge issued to the audience to see the singer as damaged, as a 'freak'. In a similar fashion, the line 'accuse me of everything' invites us to see the subject as a kind of scapegoat. The line 'deny my existence' recalls a refrain in 'Disasterpiece' from *IOWA* – 'I'm not supposed to be here / I'm not supposed to be' – a sentiment which captures the subject's internalised rejection from 'normal' society.

Tairrie B's work with My Ruin and Tura Satana has already been discussed with regard to the use of religious imagery and the discourses of purity, innocence and sin therein. In positioning herself as a 'Blasphemous Girl' and using the rhetoric of sin and purity in the manner described previously, the sense of monstrosity and alienation displayed in her work is closely linked to the negotiation of this religious symbolism. In the previous chapter I spent some time discussing her embodiment as a female subject and I do not wish to recapitulate work that was done there, however it is worth noting at this stage that the self she portrays in her work is aware of her otherness as female, as shown in both Tura Satana's 'Welcome to Violence' from *Relief Through Release*: 'Ladies and gentlemen / Welcome to violence / This time it comes in female form', and the My Ruin song 'Terror', from *Speak and Destroy*: 'I've been put upon this earth in female form / but I can handle myself with the best of you as well as the worst'. There are two further examples of her work which will be useful to the discussion here in terms of explicit references to monstrosity. Firstly, the song 'Preacher', also from *Speak and Destroy*, which begins with her inviting an unseen other into her 'world', an unsettling dream-state scene, and goes on to describe her feelings of otherness and monstrosity that is initially sung in a simplistic child-like manner:

Today is an oatmeal day
I feel like a monster babe
Preacher save me with your call and I will be your Little Miss Scareall
One eye's green and one eye's blue
Demons, angels, a love that's true
Catch me as I start to fall and I will be your Little Miss Scareall
Halloween is over but I will keep you scared
Take you to the fright side I know you'll come prepared

The phrase 'Little Miss Scareall' is sung in a scream, characteristic of the singer's style. This portrayal of monstrosity is akin to a child's nightmare, and continues in the same manner:

I am the one
Hiding under your bed
My teeth are sharp, my lips are red
I am the one
Hiding under your stairs
With snakes and spiders in her hair

It is unclear as to whom this song is addressed, although the middle section of the song does refer to a preacher, using the phrase 'it's been three weeks since my first confession', which appears in various forms throughout her work.

Another explicit reference to monstrosity appears in the song 'Monster' from the same album. The song opens with the singer in a state of victimisation: 'destroy me as want turns to need / you murder me just to watch me bleed' and the singer describes herself in terms of an outsider: 'my mouth is cruel and my lips are mean / I'm dirty minded and I'm obscene'. The chorus asserts her power:

Can I speak?
I will destroy if I speak
It will destroy how I speak

I will destroy when I speak
It will destroy you

However, the song goes on to evoke the sense of being caught between good and evil:

I see God and he is my friend
But the devil's standing next to him
He says my name and I feel so weak
Just like a monster you cannot speak
I am like a monster
When I speak am I a monster when I speak?
You're just a monster when we speak so I'm a monster when I speak
Can I speak? I'll be your monster when we speak
And I will speak to destroy

The ability or choice to speak appears elsewhere in her work with reference to the notion of 'speaking up' and empowerment through discourse, and it is in this context that I believe the references to 'can I speak' should be read here. The shifting location of monstrosity and the monster's ability to vocalise in the last section invokes images of powerlessness, fear, and the female grotesque. Tairrie B's work is marked by a confidence which is largely untouched by the expressions of worthlessness and self-hate which we find in the work of the male artists discussed here. This does not mean however that these issues are not touched upon in her work. The album *The Horror Of Beauty* deals with issues of the distortion of body image in the media, in a reversal of the type of relationship with physical appearance that we see, for example, with Slipknot's use of the carnivalesque. Here the singer aggressively asserts her own 'normality' in contrast to the grotesquerie she sees around her:

I'm so fat I'm fucked up
I'm so skinny I'm sick
I'm tired of the magazines
Talking all that bullshit

I'm not fat, they're fucked up
I'm not skinny, they're sick
I'm just tired of the critics who keep talking that bullshit

This is particularly interesting in terms of the reversal of the 'normal' and 'monstrous' worlds, but the critique of the outside world, from which the singer is alienated, remains the same.

Before I go on to discuss the work of Nine Inch Nails and their use of the cyborg as an expression of alienation and the outsider I wish first to turn to a theme common to all the artists discussed here; that of sickness, disease, and infection. It occurs in various forms across their work, and indeed in the work of other artists of the period, such as Disturbed's 'Down With The Sickness', which will be discussed in Chapter Four. Sickness is used as a metaphor for feelings of shared alienation, it can be invoked to represent fellow feeling between similarly alienated people, for example in Korn's 'Make Me Bad': 'I want something to do / need to feel the sickness in you'. It also characterises a state of being in the grotesque world of the contemporary gothic subject – there are multiple small references throughout the work of the artists discussed here that describe the subject as 'sick', or 'diseased'. Its variations are used to intensify feelings of repulsion or disgust, whether directed toward the subject or to someone else, and it can also be used to express feelings of mental instability. The idea of a virus or disease spreading through society's youth also functions as a grotesque parody of the types of moral panic that have historically attached themselves to youth cultures. There are also examples of the subject describing themselves or another person as 'a disease', and connecting the female body, sex, and infection. For example, in 'The Virus Of Life' from *The Subliminal Verses*:

Watching, bring me to my knees
Waiting, I am your disease
Lover, set my symptom free…
…This is the virus, the virus of life

This is inside us, the crisis, the knife

Or in Nine Inch Nails 'Reptile', from *The Downward Spiral* which concerns a woman who is described as having 'seeds from a thousand others drip down from within':

Oh my beautiful liar
Oh my precious whore
My disease my infection
I am so impure

This sense of the feminine grotesque recalls Mary Russo's theorisation of the deviancy of the female body, but here both the male and female body are produced as grotesque, impure, and ultimately deviant. Disease can also be used as a threat: in My Ruin's 'Diavolina', from *Speak And Destroy*, the singer says that 'hell hath no fury like a woman scorned' and uses images of disease and infection in a revenge fantasy:

You'll get what you deserve
Sleepy you close your eyes but you can't dream
You dirty girl so mean can't clean me
I'll be your disease…
…So the needle goes in I'm creeping under your skin
Soak you in sickness and scent you in sin

One final example of otherness and monstrosity that I wish to address here is the use of the cyborg in the work of Nine Inch Nails. It is a figure which is more recognisable from cyber culture and Industrial Metal, with which Nine Inch Nails are connected, than from the other sub-genres of Metal that I have discussed here. However, it is a pertinent illustration of the diversity of the contemporary gothic subject's approach to feelings of alienation and otherness, and the extent to which the human subject is altered by its experience of the grotesque. Throughout this work there has been the implicit assumption that the self of which we speak is a human subject. However, various contemporary

theories have begun to reassess what it is that this category denotes, and indicated ways in which we may begin to renegotiate that category and work towards redefinition, for example Donna Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto,[16] and the emerging area of Posthumanist theory.[17] Technological advancement presents a challenge to humanism as a broad historical movement. Modern science fiction and modern technological science have introduced us to the concept of artificial and cybernetic intelligence: HAL, the Borg, *Blade Runner*. The terrifying prospect of the cybernetic man is the possibility of the machine to possess a stark and unemotional reason that apes that of mankind. Haraway's theorisation of the cyborg does not, like Frankenstein's monster, desire admittance to the human world, but celebrates its own outsider being. Judith Halberstam positions Haraway's cyborg subject as indicative of a shift in the postmodern cultural location of the human and the monstrous.[18] The cyborg, as figured by Haraway, possesses the ability to transcend divisions such as race, class and gender. The cyborg is not wholly anti-humanist, for it stands in opposition to and is reliant upon the human and humanistic for its definition, but it is significant not least for the change it marks in our understanding of the human and the monstrous. The figure of the cyborg, in its illegitimacy, forces us to confront our humanity at the basic level of our assumptions of that category. While Haraway's cyborg is a figure of emulation, it is worth noting that the conception of the cyborg within popular science fiction and fantasy, from which she partially draws, is often based around the fear of emulation. Haraway's mythic technological future is an opportunity for the re-examination of the relationship between science and nature, human and alien, earth and space, in order

[16] Donna J. Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Later Twentieth Century', pp. 149-182, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. (London: Free Association Press, 1991)

[17] There is a burgeoning literature on Posthumanism, concerning theories of the body and in which the cyborg and cybernetics is a crucial part: for a selection of this work see Neil Badmington ed., *Posthumanism* (Hampshire, NY: Palgrave, 2000), Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston eds., *Posthuman Bodies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), Anne Balsamo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996)

[18] Halberstam, p. 162.

to create and explore new regions of knowledge,[19] but the cyborg of popular culture, upon which she draws, is, in its most famous incarnations, both a source of fear and a reification of innate humanity. The relevance of the figure of the cyborg in popular culture is to show the importance of emotion and, by association, sensation, to the self-conception of the human subject as human at this point in time. It is for this reason that I do not believe that the cyborg can be figured as a utopian being. The relationship between emotion and sensation is crucial to our understanding of the embodied subject, as was examined in Chapter Two. While the cyborg, as emotionless being, presents the possibility of a world without pain, we are reminded of the fundamental nature of pain to the experience of subjectivity as it has been presented so far. In the lyrical work of Nine Inch Nails, for example, one recurrent feature which may be observed is the desire to feel emotion and sensation, the 'slipping away' of the self, and the use of pain to re-establish one's existence. In 'Hurt'[20] from *The Downward Spiral*, a song which combines images of self-harm and drug abuse, this link is made explicit in the opening lines:

> I hurt myself today
> To see if I still feel
> I focus on the pain
> The only thing that's real.

This reaction to numbness is the counterpart to the cyborg-type figure presented in 'The Becoming', from the same album:

> I beat my machine, it's a part of me, it's inside of me
> I'm stuck in this dream, it's changing me, I am becoming
> The me that you know he had some second thoughts
> He's covered in scabs he is broken and sore

[19] This is presented most clearly in her use of the semiotic square in 'The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others', in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treicher eds., *Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 295 – 337.
[20] Johnny Cash later covered this song on his album of covers *American IV: The Man Comes Around*, released in 2002. Arguably, this version is now more famous than the original.

The me that you know he doesn't come around much
That part of me isn't here anymore
All pain disappears, it's the nature of, of my circuitry
Drowns out all I hear, no escape from this, my new consciousness
That me that you know used to have feelings
But the blood has stopped pumping and he is left to decay
The me that you know is now made of up wires
And even when I'm right with you I'm so far away

While the human self is 'broken and sore', he is capable of feeling emotion, but loss of emotion is partnered with cyborg imagery. As the song develops and the human self becomes cyborg, the human self is relegated to the third person, it becomes the other. The use of cyborg imagery is furthermore used to express alienation and dissociation from the experience of human subjectivity. Marilyn Manson's album *Mechanical Animals* also uses cyborg imagery to express dissociation, merging the mechanical with the alien to articulate the 'deadness' of what is termed 'norm life'. This album shall be discussed in more detail in a later chapter. However, both the distance from human contact expressed in 'The Becoming' and the disdain for 'norm life' found in *Mechanical Animals* serve to illustrate the centrality of human emotion and sensation – which is expressed as pain – to the experience of human subjectivity.

Conclusion

This chapter has established the world of the contemporary gothic subject as that of the grotesque, and suggested the model of the gothic monster as a context for reading the contemporary gothic subject as an outsider. In taking on monstrous status, the subject is able to critique the 'normal' world from which they are excluded. The manifestation of monstrosity, represented by the figure of the gothic monster, undergoes a change in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, argued by Halberstam to be a response to the location of evil within modernity. While the figure of the monster in nineteenth century

gothic literature can be projected onto a specific bodily locale, contemporary gothic is unable to abject the monster in the same manner. The comfort of the separation of good and evil, self and other, is destroyed, and the category of the monstrous is transformed into a site of identification and sympathy. The contemporary gothic subject is characterised in terms of the sick, the polluted and the evil, as a consequence of this imbrication of the monstrous and the normal. In this manner, as Botting suggests, the monster is used to critique the systems of exclusion which act upon it. In some cases though, the use of the monstrous reflects back on the contemporary gothic subject and the systems of exclusion that it puts in place, as with Jonathan Davis' identification with the feminine.

Chapter Four

The Figure of the Child: Innocence, Inheritance, Abuse and Vengeance

This chapter will examine the figure of the child as it appears in relation to the contemporary gothic subject. In studying the song texts and the culture they inhabit the child as a symbol, a representative possibility, or as a body, has emerged as a recurrent theme. This chapter explores these recurrent facets of the child figure in more depth than has been allowed in previous chapters. The child often appears as the victim of trauma or abuse, events which are seen to have a great deal of impact on the subsequent development of adult identity, as was explored in Chapter One. The subject is portrayed as damaged, an issue reinforced by the use of the grotesque to contextualise self-image, as was discussed in Chapter Three. Where the child is gendered as male, the figure functions to explore issues of masculine crisis. Where the tradition of the gothic monster was used as a context in which to read the monstrous and grotesque elements of the contemporary gothic subject, this chapter focuses on the child as monster, using figures from horror film and literature, which provide the closest relation within popular culture to the figure of the child I shall examine here. Within the lyrical texts I examine, the identification of the child with the future as an ideological construct is shown to be a central factor in the function of the child figure as an icon representative of a generation, and through which, issues of inheritance and anxiety are explored. Finally, the figure of the child is examined in relation to ideas of American national identity.

Whilst Rock and Metal music have long been associated with the social category of youth, and particularly the teenager, what marks Popular Metal as I have examined it here (particularly the work of artists associated with Nu-Metal) as distinct from their predecessors in this respect are overt and explicit references to childhood trauma such as abuse, bullying and neglect, which produce the figure of the child as a victim. In particular, this abuse or trauma relates to the family and is sometimes associated with very violent imagery. As has been noted by Adam Rafalovich, contemporary forms of Metal

music have undergone substantial changes both thematically and aesthetically since the early 1990s and are more likely now to display thematic concern with introspection, the articulation of emotional pain, and what he calls 'a limitless exploration of violent fantasy' rather than 'the objectification of women and self-indulgence'[21] as was common with earlier forms of Metal. As has already been shown in Chapter One, the role of violent fantasy with regard to others is certainly a prominent element of contemporary forms of Metal, and I have also found this to be the case with regard to the figure of the child.

In using the term 'figure' it is important to note what exactly is implied: the child occupies the role of a powerful symbolic being rather than a mere social actor; and something of Dudley Andrew's discussion of film theory can illustrate this quality. [22] Primarily, my intention is to draw attention to the appearance of the child as exceeding the limitations of its role as an actor within narrative. Andrew explores the mode of representation by which the figure draws attention to itself, asserting that figurative language and by extension the use of figures in filmic discourse 'transgress or manipulate grammar and, by doing so, insist on the importance of their peculiar mode of presentation'. As 'an indication of the presence of narration' the manipulation of standard grammar or filmic representation draws attention to itself. [23] This is to indicate that the use of the child in the sense in which it appears here is one which is critically aware of the double and magnified role that the child plays. When I speak then of the figure of the child it should be understood that I refer to those instances when the child takes on the symbolic burden of childhood. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that both the child and childhood, as far as they appear in art, literature, film and song, are also often invested with the further symbolic burden of the future.

[21] Rafalovich, p. 22
[22] Dudley Andrew, *Concepts In Film Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) p. 158
[23] Andrew, p. 158.

Gothic Origins: The Child as Monster

The tradition of the child as monster upon which I draw here appears in American popular culture during and after the 1950s, and in which the child bears the symbolic duty of representing the health of the nation. I will concentrate here primarily upon film texts, although it is noted that a good deal of these are adaptations of literary texts. In his study of film, Robin Wood says of Peter Conveney's reading of the Romantic cult of the child in *Images of Childhood* that the figure of the child 'reflects the condition of civilisation, its health or sickness, as projected in the values and aspirations of its art.'[24] Wood describes various types of children appearing in film, but of particular interest is his sketch of the child in the American context. Wood makes the point that the family, as a central tenet of what he calls 'American ideology', is essential to understanding the child, such that the latter 'has his full meaning only in relation to it.'[25] To the extent that the American context is crucial to this study of popular music, theory of American film and particularly the American horror film shall prove useful at this juncture, in order to illustrate the place of the child and the family within this context.

The correlation between the child and, as Robin Wood puts it, 'the condition of civilisation' is a key element in understanding the significance of the child here. The investment in children as constitutive of the future places a burden of responsibility upon the child to deliver this future, but also on the figurative parent to provide for that future. This is particularly acute in the American context, as Kathy Merlock Jackson argues in *Images Of Children In American Film*.[26] Citing innocence as a national trait, and the child as a symbol of frontier spirit, Jackson explores the notion of a loss of American innocence in the 1960s as a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Kennedy assassination and the Vietnam War as well as a generalised rise in crime, and the contemporaneous emergence

[24] Philip Conveney, *The Image Of Childhood: The Individual and Society: A Study of the Theme in English Literature.* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967) First published as *Poor Monkey: The Child In Literature.* (Rockliff: London, 1957), Robin Wood, *Personal Views: Explorations in Film*. (London: Gordon Fraser, 1976) p. 155.
[25] Robin Wood, *Personal Views*, p. 165.
[26] Kathy Merlock Jackson, *Images Of Children In American Film: A Sociocultural Analysis.* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1986)

of the child-as-monster films in the 1960s and 1970s.[27] The 'loss of innocence' that is associated with these events, and also by the threat of nuclear war, resonates in the depictions of Regan in *The Exorcist*, Damien in *The Omen* and the baby of *Rosemary's Baby* to suggest that innocence may be deceptive, and also that the family, one of the centres of American ideology, was under threat. It is telling that despite the passage of time these films and the children depicted in them still occupy a place of some canonical significance for the contemporary gothic.

Vivian Sobchack pinpoints the 1960s as a crucial point for the development of the portrayal of family, citing the crisis experienced by American bourgeois patriarchy during this period as formative for the portrayal of the family and the child in these genres. The American home and family, as the centre of the 'institutionalisation and perpetuation of the bourgeois social world'[28] is the focus of Sobchack's study and of the genres she assesses: horror, science fiction, and family melodrama. For Sobchack, the contradictions of the mythology of the American family and its practice are played out in the figure of the child. Moving on from the devil-child films, which she suggests threatened the mythology of the family to the degree that they suggested the end of childhood and the lack of future,[29] she posits that the horror film in the 1980s delivers not the child as terroriser, but as terrorised, particularly within the sub-genre of teen slasher film. The conflation inherent here between youth and child is, for our purposes, perhaps somewhat less than useful, however the point is made by Sobchack that in various ways it is an anxiety concerning patriarchy which is played out around the figure of the child. She characterises this in gothic terms, as the sins of the fathers being visited upon the children.[30] This sense of the burden of history weighing upon its youngest members, that the mistakes of previous generations will impact upon their children, is taken up in much more depth by Marilyn Manson. It is

[27] Jackson, p. 16.
[28] Vivian Sobchack, 'Bringing It All Back Home: Family Economy and Generic Exchange', *American Horrors: Essays on the Modern American Horror Film.* Ed. Gregory A. Waller. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987) p. 175-194
[29] Sobchack in Waller ed., p. 181.
[30] Sobchack in Waller ed., p. 185.

a theme to which he returns throughout his work, particularly with regard to the source of violence within contemporary American culture. We also see references in Slipknot's lyrics pertaining to abandonment issues concerning the father figure. Although references to familial relationships are common to a number of artists within this period, there are notable exceptions - Nine Inch Nails, for example.

Sabine Büssing tracks the development of the child from victim to aggressor in twentieth century horror literature: for which, she asserts, the child has become an 'indispensable' figure.[31] She identifies two types of representations of children in the same era: the 'Evil Innocent' and the 'Child-as-Monster'. The former is subject to forces beyond its control, whilst the latter describes a child figure which is entirely other, either as supernatural, alien, or a more domestic version. Büssing also addresses the child as monster in the sense of monstrous progeny: vampire or zombie, for example. Her reading is heavily informed by the trait of innocence and the threat to both that and purity which is addressed within horror fiction, with particular reference to the gothic tradition. The figure of the 'Evil Innocent' which she suggests – of which the possessed child such as Regan or Damien is one type – is another term for the devil child, the child which is neither fully evil nor fully innocent, that figure which evil forces work through. As a figure of vengeance, the 'Evil Innocent' is a useful concept for the contextualisation of the presentation of the child in my area of work. However, the external forces that work through the 'Evil Innocent' are either absent or internalised in the figure of the child that relates to the contemporary gothic subject. Specifically, the religious aspect of those forces is absent from that figure, although the associated vocabulary of sin may still appear. Büssing suggests a blankness and a 'strangely flat impression' evoked by the child in horror film and fiction; she suggests that the child takes on the role of doppelganger, a

[31] Sabine Büssing, *Aliens In The Home: The Child In Horror Fiction* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987) p. xiv.

'juvenile reflection' of humanity for which the child, as personification of 'the future and hopes of mankind' is ideally suited.[32]

A figure related to the 'Evil Innocent' is Steven Bruhm's theorisation of the 'Gothic Child', which, he argues, is 'not a child at all in the sense that it fits into any of our available discourses on the child-as-subject.'[33] That is to say that it is not a child awaiting rescue from possession, it is not 'an eternal Innocent'. The opposition – or rather, as Bruhm argues, the dialectic – of innocence and possession/corruption, produces an anxiety concerning the child's identity and knowledge, specifically a surfeit of that knowledge. Bruhm uses the example of the children in John Wyndham's 1957 novel *The Midwich Cuckoos* (a story subsequently adapted to film in *The Village of the Damned* in 1960), part of whose terror is their superior intellectual ability to that of the adults surrounding them. He claims that the Gothic deploys a 'putative childhood blankness',[34] manipulated to serve particular cultural ends by calling attention to the child's – and therefore society's – vulnerability in the face of various threats. Exploring the cultural functions of the figure of the child in American culture, he suggests that in the period following the 1950s children were produced 'as sites of innocence', which were 'vulnerable to…invasion' by such forces as the political other (in the case of *Midwich Cuckoos*, communism). As the cultural other demands 'a legitimate and legitimating space in American culture',[35] Bruhm sees the 'Gothic Child' as an artistic consequence of the social pressures upon the values of the middle-class family in the second half of the twentieth century.

These various approaches to the child circle around it as a type of other, a monster in the sense that was explored in Chapter Three with regard to the gothic and the grotesque, and it is to this theorisation that we shall return. Robin Wood's typology of others in American horror of the 1970s specifically mentions children as perhaps 'the most

[32] Büssing, (1987), p. xv-xvi.
[33] Bruhm, 'Nightmare on Sesame Street', p. 103.
[34] Bruhm, 'Nightmare on Sesame Street', p. 100.
[35] Bruhm, 'Nightmare on Sesame Street', p. 101.

oppressed section of the population'.[36] Wood's theory of horror is based around the notion of repression, the monster in art being the embodiment of that which is repressed within society. Wood suggests that the otherness of children is hated because it represents that which is repressed within the adult population, and indeed this would seem to fortify the claims by such theorists as Germaine Greer that American society is 'hostile to children' and that the children similarly are hostile toward their parents.[37] Here then I would link the child as other and as monster to the idea of the child as representing the return of the repressed (as a psychoanalytic concept) which here implies that the portrayal of child as other represents for those who are complicit, or implied in that portrayal, as subjects of both fear and guilt: that is, the fear of what the child is capable, the fear of the future, and guilt or anxiety concerning the future.

The Child and Childhood: Textual Analysis

The three artists whose work I shall examine in detail here – Korn, Slipknot and Marilyn Manson – have been selected for their particular attention to the theme of childhood and their use of the child figure. Childhood abuse, both sexual and otherwise, is a particularly important theme in the work of Korn. Lead singer Jonathan Davis has indicated in interview that he was the victim of childhood sexual abuse on the part of his neighbour, and has characterised his relationship with his stepmother as abusive.[38] The two songs which deal most directly with these issues are 'Daddy' from *Korn*, and 'Kill You' from *Life Is Peachy*. Although 'Daddy' would seem to implicate Davis' father as the perpetrator of abuse, he has stated (in the interview referenced above) that this was not the case, and the lyrics of the song support this: although the middle section contains the line

[36] Robin Wood, 'The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s', *Hollywood From Vietnam to Reagan*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) p. 70-94.p. 75.
[37] Germaine Greer, *Sex And Destiny: The Politics of Human Fertility*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1984) p. 2 & p. 4.
[38] *Kerrang!* October 19, 1996, 'Heart of Darkness', interview by Steffan Chirazi. Whilst lyrical evidence from 'Hey Daddy' points towards his stepfather as the perpetrator of abuse, as Adam Rafalovich states, this interview would suggest otherwise. It should also be noted that the identification of his neighbour as the perpetrator is given wide currency within fan communities, and can to a certain extent be reinforced by the lyrical evidence available in 'Mr. Rogers'.

'And fucked / Your own child', the second verse, in the voice of the abuser states: 'I'll be your Daddy' – destabilising what may appear to be a concrete assumption concerning the identity of his abuser. The song appears last on the album, and draws to a disturbing close, as Davis breaks down in tears and can be heard to leave the recording studio. The song is not a common feature of their live performance, and given the manner in which the recording ends, one may speculate that this is because the song is too upsetting.

The song deals not only with Davis' anger toward the abuser but also feelings of neglect by or isolation from his parents, who are unable to protect him and did not believe his allegations. Interestingly, the song's first verse is a plea for forgiveness from his mother, stating that he 'just had to get out all my pain and suffering / now that I'm done, remember I will always love you / I'm your son.' Davis' parents separated when he was three, and his father remarried when he was twelve.[39] It is not clear at what age the alleged abuse took place, but given Davis' feelings toward his stepmother as articulated in 'Kill You' it seems unlikely that the mother figure to which he refers in the first verse is his stepmother. In another song from *Life Is Peachy*, 'Mr Rogers', a song which derives its name from the American children's programme 'Mister Rogers' Neighbourhood', Davis laments the loss of his childhood and ensuing loss of innocence: 'My childhood is gone … his innocence gone / I'm that child you terrorised.' In line with these autobiographical elements, much of the thematic concern with children in Korn lyrics is connected to the loss of innocence and the ingress of violence into childhood. In an interview given in 1996, Davis stated that the band 'try to bring out the hidden evils of innocence. Innocence is very evil and that comes across in our music.'[40] This bifurcated view of childhood echoes the victim/threat and innocent/evil divisions that were discussed in the Introduction. Examples range from the examination of the dark side of childhood as presented through nursery rhymes in 'Shoots and Ladders' from *Korn* to 'Pretty', from *Follow The Leader*, a song influenced from

[39] Udo, p. 60.
[40] Jaan Uhelszki 'The Creepy Side of Korn' *Addicted To Noise* magazine, 1996 - <http://ndoz2.tripod.com/interviews/atn.html> accessed August 2007.

Davis' experience working in a mortuary, and which focuses on the death of an infant girl due to sexual abuse. The song 'Justin', also from *Follow The Leader*, was inspired by a visit the band made to a child through the Make a Wish Foundation, and praises the strength of the child about to meet death. References to childhood bullying occur in 'Reclaim My Place', again from *Follow The Leader*, and in 'Wake Up', from *Issues*, where the relationship with his bandmates is also characterised in the same context. Reference is also made to the pressure felt by the child to conform to certain standards of childhood and attendant low self-esteem in 'Dead Bodies Everywhere' from *Follow The Leader*: 'You really want me to be a good son / Why? You make me feel like no-one.'

Davis is also a father, and the theme of lost innocence is repeated in the song 'Seed', and his reaction to looking into his child's eyes: 'I see something I can't be / Beautiful and care free / that's how I used to be.' Davis' childhood was, as has been mentioned, marred by bullying, and this model of innocence he evokes acts as a site upon which he meditates upon his own childhood as a lost object. (Notably his experience as a parent does not lead him to identify with the parents of his fans.) This is seen most clearly in the song 'Children of the Korn', from *Follow The Leader* which features guest vocals from hip-hop artist Ice Cube, a song which articulates an almost clichéd resistance and rebellion ethos with lines such as 'How you gonna tell me where to skate, who to date … something's gotta give / Parents or the kids, it won't be the kids' from Ice Cube. The title of the song refers to Stephen King's short story (subsequently made into a film) dealing with a rural American community where the children have killed everyone over the age of eighteen under the influence of the monstrous 'He Who Walks Behind The Rows'. The Korn song deals with a generation of youth characterised as the 'Children of the Korn' for whom Davis acts as an emotional conduit – 'And the children are born / You're feeling through me / We're the children of the Korn'. Significantly, Davis includes himself in the categorisation of the 'children of the Korn' – both strengthening the idea of the audience as

a community of shared values, and positioning the child figure as a site of identification and production of meaning.

Most of the explicit references to children and childhood in Korn's work are confined to the their first three albums, while the subsequent works *Issues, Untouchables* and *Take A Look In The Mirror* feature a much lower level of interaction with these themes and images, in terms of the lyrical content. It is notable however that both *Issues* and *Untouchables* feature children in the album artwork, and this serves as a link with *Korn, Life Is Peachy* and *Follow The Leader*. Significantly, the debut album's artwork shows a young blonde girl on a swing in a playpark, and the long shadow of an adult figure standing out of view of the camera. This image may be taken to reflect the place of childhood abuse as figured in Korn's lyrics or as a shadow or spectre lingering over childhood, and reinforces the place of childhood trauma as an underlying issue throughout their work. Another interesting image is the cover for the album *Issues*, which features a drawing of a battered and threadbare teddy bear, one button eye missing and laid on the ground, with stuffing poking out of its stomach. This cover was designed by Alfredo Carlos, an MTV competition winner, and this and the three other finalists' work are displayed inside the cover booklet. The doll was also made into a piece of promotional merchandise by Living Toyz, and sold on the 2000 'Sick And Twisted' tour. The *Life Is Peachy* album cover features a black and white picture of young boy looking into a mirror with a larger and more shadowy figure stood behind him (shown in the mirror reflection but not visible behind the 'real' boy), the front cover of *Follow The Leader* is a sepia-tinted cartoon image of numerous children following a blonde girl in a red dress up a hopscotch grid to the precipice of a cliff, and the inside cover shows a photograph of another young blonde girl at the door of a room where Jonathan Davis lies lifeless on the floor, strung up as a puppet, while other band members sit at a table in front of a wall where hang three framed pornographic images of women tied in bondage ropes. The *Untouchables* cover, again using cartoon images and a sepia tint, shows numerous faces of children, some with

scars, some with body modifications, all looking dispassionate. In these visual images, particularly the recurrent image of the blonde girl, the figure of the child acts as a carrier of innocence, projecting that same 'blankness' that Büssing and Bruhm suggested. The blonde girl might also be interpreted as a figure of identification on Davis' part. I have already established that there is an element of feminisation to the expression of his vulnerability, and in discussing the anger and frustration he felt as a child he says that 'even now, I don't let it all go. I still hold back shit. I'm scared, like a little kid. I don't want to let all of it out, and I don't know why.'[41]

Similarly to Korn, the lyrics of Slipknot reveal the formative nature of childhood experience upon adult male subjectivity, in this case with reference to the absent father. However, in contrast to the beaten-down persona prevalent within Korn lyrics, Slipknot's work focuses to a much larger extent upon the aspect of revenge. Acoustically Slipknot's work is generally far more brutal, a violence known to be reflected in their live performances, as has previously been discussed. In addition, the imagery used in their lyrics relies much more upon the grotesque, particularly with regard to the body of the child. In place of the 'children of the Korn', Slipknot's 'New Abortion' from *IOWA* imagines 'fields of dejected morbid progeny' – again, the emphasis upon children as the product of their upbringing. More clearly than Korn, Slipknot identify themselves with their intended audience: 'They always say that it's always our fault / but everything we say is taken with a grain of salt'. Within this song the generation to which they refer is partially characterised as having been uniquely betrayed by their parents: 'How's it feel to be the new abortion / the only generation to suffer extortion?' or 'nepotistic negligence' in 'Metabollic', again from *IOWA*. Resistance to this 'extortion' is emphasised to a much greater degree – as we have seen Slipknot appropriate images of decay to symbolise the destruction which then can pave the way for renewal. The community engendered by the use of 'we' to represent both the assumed audience and the artists is particularly strong

[41] *Kerrang!* October 19, 1996, 'Heart of Darkness', interview by Steffan Chirazi with Jonathan Davis.

within such songs as ‘Pulse of the Maggots’ from *The Subliminal Verses*, with the rallying call of ‘We are the new diabolic / we are the bitter bucolic … we fight till no one can fight us / we live and no one can stop us.’ ‘Bucolic’ in this context would seem to refer to their home state Iowa. These lines exemplify not only anger at betrayal but also the power found in community where there was once isolation: ‘we won’t walk alone any longer.’

Betrayal is also expressed through bodily themes in ‘Welcome’, again from *The Subliminal Verses*, ‘Before you condemn, you rape them, feed us meconium / Stunt our growth from our souls to our throats – cut’. However, there is also sense of circularity and inevitability engendered within this song:

> Much to my surprise I will wake up
> And follow the path of the ones I am made of
> But this time I won’t give in
> I will save you from my sins

Here the singer recognises the inevitability of following in the footsteps of his parents, or the adult generation – but also places himself as a redemptive, Christ-like figure, which is more common in Marilyn Manson’s lyrics and self-portrait as Antichrist Superstar. The sense of repeated history is also evident within ‘Circle’ from the same album:

> Give me the dust of my fathers
> Stand on the face of the ancients
> Bare the secret flesh of time itself
> (follow me) I’ve come so far I’m behind again
> (follow me) I wish so hard I’m there again

However, in ‘Welcome’, this circularity is resisted insofar as the singer maintains that he will not repeat the mistakes of his parents.

A more extensive and elaborate use of the figure of the child is found within the lyrics of Marilyn Manson. The theme of the vengeful child is taken to quite deliberate

extremes in Manson's work, and is also read in a national and ideological context the extent of which is not seen with either Korn or Slipknot, indeed not with perhaps any other artist in the same field. Manson uses the figure of the child as a deliberate tool of shock and of magnification of the impact of social convention upon the individual. The song 'Lunchbox', from *Portrait Of An American Family*, portrays the playground as a site of conflict between bully and bullied child, the victim has his 'lunchbox and I'm armed real well… Next motherfucker gonna get my metal'. Much like Korn's 'Shoots and Ladders', the album deals to a great extent with the ingress of violence into childhood, which is represented in the inner sleeve artwork. This sleeve contains child-like drawings of sweets and lollipops, but also hypodermic syringes and insects surrounding the text in the booklet. The cover of *Portrait of An American Family* features a slightly grotesque plasticine family of parents and two children sitting in a room as if to face a television – which features on the inside and back cover.

Throughout Manson's work he identifies the audience as children, with repeated reference to 'our' mothers and fathers, and includes himself within this category, for example 'I'm just a boy playing the suicide king' from 'Mechanical Animals' on the album of the same name. Similar to Slipknot, Manson uses the trope of education and ideological inculcation to portray the oppression of the younger generation: 'Raised to be stupid, taught to be nothing at all' in 'I Don't Like The Drugs (But The Drugs Like Me)' from *Mechanical Animals*, or 'And when we were good, you just closed your eyes' from 'The Fight Song' on *Holy Wood*. There are numerous examples of Manson's use of the downtrodden child or teenager presenting a threat to an assumed adult audience, most starkly presented in 'Disposable Teens', also from *Holy Wood*:

> I wanna thank you mom
> I wanna thank you dad
> For bringing this fucking world
> To a bitter end

…
The more that you fear us
The bigger we get
And don't be surprised, don't be surprised
Don't be surprised when we destroy all of it

Manson presents himself as a threat to the parent generation in a more intense manner than either Korn or Slipknot. Here, in particular, the duality of victim and threat is used to effect. While songs like 'The Fight Song' and 'Disposable Teens' concentrate primarily on the strength of the child (or in the latter case teen) audience to wreak revenge through destruction of the oppressive adult generation, 'The Man That You Fear' from *Antichrist Superstar* is directed toward that adult generation as much as it is a portrait of himself as the avenging angel figure of the Antichrist Superstar:

The boy that you loved is the monster you fear
Peel off all those eyes and crawl into the dark
You've poisoned all your children to camouflage your scars
Pray unto the splinters, pray unto your fear
Pray your life was just a dream
The cut that never heals

The sense of blame and corruption of children as represented by tropes of pollution is matched by a recurrent reference to the future as having been removed – 'your apple has been rotting / tomorrow's turned up dead' in the song above, 'We are dead and tomorrow's cancelled / because of things we did yesterday' in 'Cruci-fiction In Space', 'We got no future / and we wanna be just like you' in 'The Death Song', both from *Holy Wood*, and 'Stand up and admit / tomorrow's never coming' in 'This is the New (S)hit' from *The Golden Age of Grotesque*. This sense of nihilism conflicts sharply with the investment in children as representative of hope and hope in the future, as well as confounding the expectation of vitality in youth that is present elsewhere in his work, with the energy of 'The Fight Song' for example. Manson rails against the disempowerment and deadness or

numbness of youth at the same time as calling upon the power of youth for destruction. This contradiction is explored with particular effect in the album *Holy Wood*, written after the Columbine shootings. The song 'The Nobodies' which references the incident at Columbine from the point of view of the shooters, evokes not only the frustration of youth but the futility of America's reaction:

> Some children died the other day
> We fed machines and then we prayed
> Puked up and down in morbid faith
> You should have seen the ratings that day

The language choice in this verse emphasises the idea of a society which cares little for its children, or does not understand how to care for them effectively: the non-specificity of 'some' children, and the relegation of their deaths to television ratings statistics suggest a heartlessness and lack of real concern or appropriate action in the wake of the incident to which the song refers. Considering the normalcy with which emotional pain is referred to in terms of physical pain or bodily images, the deadness of the 'machine' image is somewhat incongruous, and the subsequent use of 'puked up and down in morbid faith' can be seen as a grotesque image which undermines the usefulness of prayer and portrays it as a pointless waste of energy.

Although the work of each of the artists above discusses the child and childhood with a slightly different emphasis, there are certain common factors that make it possible to build a picture of the role that the child and childhood plays in this period, and which is fundamental to the portrayal of subjectivity. In each, the parent figure or parent generation is seen to have forsaken or betrayed the child. In this there is a profound sense of distance between the two. In each, the child will have or is seen to have revenge upon the parent generation for this betrayal. Aspects of the violent and the grotesque are expressed through the body of the child, which can be juxtaposed with the sense of deadness or numbness which characterises the experience of life in the grotesque world of the

contemporary gothic subject. Perhaps most importantly, childhood experience characterised by abuse and trauma is central to the development of adult subjectivity, which is closely allied with ideas of monstrosity. In this way the subject self-identifies as a liminal figure, an outsider or other. The self is set against the majority of mainstream society, ideally placed to critique that society.

The Vengeful Child

The term 'vengeful child' has been used above to describe certain subject positions adopted in lyrical sources by the child figure. However, I would like to clarify this concept here in order to posit this child as a gothic figure with regard to other gothic children who appear in popular culture, such as the 'Evil Innocent'. This shall be done with reference to a particular technique used by various artists: the flashback or dream sequence. This technique emphasises the importance of childhood trauma on the development of self-identity, as well as its significance as a critique upon contemporary society, and in particular, contemporary American society.

Taking Sabine Büssing's figure of the 'Evil Innocent' (the child through whom evil forces work to take vengeance on the parent generation or forces of authority, thus invoking guilt on the part of the parent generation), as a contextualising figure, I will suggest the figure of the Vengeful child. Whereas the 'Evil Innocent' left the innocence of the child untouched throughout the course of its possession, the Vengeful Child is conscious of its own vengeance and the reasons for it. This is not to say that innocence is totally ignored, but rather that it does not survive, and the child, who may by now occupy the body of an adult, fully embodies his own revenge. In the examples that follow it is noted that we encounter a male protagonist. In some of the examples the rage and vengeance of the child is directed toward the mother or mother figure, with particular violence. However in other examples (and some from the same artists) this rage is directed toward father figures, or toward both parents. For other artists, and Marilyn Manson is the

best example of this, rage and vengeance are directed toward the parent generation rather than toward a specific parental figure. For Manson, the Vengeful child is used as a narrative device; the Antichrist Superstar is embodied as the result of the progression from wormboy to avenging angel. The Nu-Metal subgenre which flourished in the period following 1994 contains many examples of the breakdown of traditional family life as a source of trauma; the works of Korn, Disturbed, and Papa Roach for example, all contain reference to abusive adult figures, broken families, and in Korn and Disturbed in particular the child becomes a vengeful figure. Here the anger of the child – which could otherwise be characterised as teen angst or childish petulance – takes on a malevolence when transposed into the figure of the adult, done so through the relocation or revisitation of the anger of the child through the voice of the (young) adult. This is focussed through the body and presence of the lead singer, and as has been already been suggested, this acts as an emotional conduit for the audience. What we are dealing with here then is a complex relationship of the song to the body and performance of the lead singer. The autobiographical nature of the first person perspective used in much Popular Metal calls for the acknowledgement of the often confessional (or assumed confessional) aspect of the song, on the part of the lead singer/songwriter. In terms of the lead singer vocalising a point of view of a child, the singer exists both as the adult and as the child. The adult perspective is susceptible to melodrama or pathos at the same time that the child's perspective is afforded a degree of maliciousness and malevolence. There is also something of the grotesque or the abject in this interplay of the bodies of the child and adult. The child/adult, represented by these instances of co-existence, represent the breakdown of the distinction between the child and the adult at the same time as we are made painfully aware of the difference between them. The impact of the experiences of childhood upon the adult consciousness is brought out of history, disturbing the boundaries that set the two apart.

There are three examples which I shall discuss in detail. The song 'Down With The Sickness' by Disturbed, from the album *The Sickness* (2000), 'Kill You' by Korn, from the album *Life Is Peachy*, and 'Break', from Tura Satana's *All Is Not Well.* All three of these songs deal with the impact of childhood trauma upon the individual and the impulse to vengeance. In her discussion of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House Of Leaves*, Catherine Spooner refers to 'a strand of contemporary gothic that reads the return of the repressed in terms of childhood abuse',[42] a thread which I would argue is certainly in evidence here and which has been identified as one of the key traits of the portrayal of the child and childhood in this period.

'Down With The Sickness' utilises themes which are prevalent within the contemporary gothic: self-loathing, madness, and as is obvious from the title, sickness and infection. In common with the lyrics of Slipknot, the 'sickness' to which Disturbed refer in this song is in many ways welcomed – it has a transformative power and is used to positively reclaim images of decay while also being used to identify a community of 'infected' persons. The singer positions himself as a conduit for the audience's feelings of negativity, though which transference he gains power, he recognises 'the sickness' in all of them, inviting them to 'open up your hate and let it flow into me'. The 'madness' that has come over him by the end of the song, although perhaps to be associated with lack of control, is in fact a declaration of control over both himself and the audience. In the live setting this works well as a piece of theatrical interaction with the audience, but it also suggests the power relations that exist between the audience and the performer outside that setting, that is, that the audience may use a singer as a figurehead in their processes of subcultural identification. Madness, insanity and infection are used here with particular effect in order to characterise a community of downtrodden persons; identifying individualism with the relationship between self-worth and self-hate.

[42] Spooner, *Contemporary Gothic*, p. 45

The song first positions the narrator as being within ‘a sea of loathing’, and as subservient to a master figure, the identity of whom is not revealed. The spectre of the non-human is raised with the line ‘it seems what’s left of my human side is slowly changing in me’ – with references throughout the song to ‘changes’ taking place within the person of the narrator, which pertain both to the transformation and flashback within the song, and to perhaps the changes one might distinguish as being part of the experience of the band’s primarily adolescent audience. The transformation and flashback that are part of the song are characterised by the ‘demon’ awoken within the narrator, the world being ‘a scary place / now that you’ve woken up the demon in me.’ Throughout the song it is unclear to whom the narrator refers by ‘you’ – it is implied that this is the audience, particularly with the lines concerning the singer as a conduit for hate, however this ‘you’ is not stable, and I believe that it also pertains to the master figure, which in this case is the narrator’s mother. The flashback sequence of the song, heralded by the line ‘when I dream’, which leads into the song’s middle section, uses language which indicates that the singer is occupying the subject position of the child, particularly the word ‘mommy’ and phrases such as ‘I’ll be a good boy’. The language in this flashback sequence changes from the childlike to the violently adult, as the narrator is able to imagine an avenue of revenge unavailable to him as a powerless child. From pleading with ‘mommy’ not to hit him, and telling her that she’s hurting him, he asks why he is being abused, and eventually changes to him being in the position of the aggressor. The language becomes more adult and increasingly violent as this section progresses, culminating in the lines:

> I don’t need this shit
> you stupid sadistic abusive fucking whore
> Would you like to see how it feels mommy?
> Here it comes get ready to die!’

By the end of this section the adult perspective is reassumed, as indicated through the vocabulary, and the return to the standard verse format familiar from the rest of the song.

What is most notable, apart perhaps from the violence of the imagery used, is the interplay of vulnerability and power throughout the lyrics – the servitude indicated at the outset being exorcised by the dream sequence. The child figure here becomes an aggressor, and because the child figure is mediated through the body of the adult, the rage of the child is magnified to become an altogether more malevolent figure.

The Korn song 'Kill You' again features the vengeful child figure. Davis has talked in interview about the relative referred to in 'Kill You' – the same interview in which he discussed the sexual abuse of which he was a victim – and discusses the effect had on him by his parents' divorce and moving between different families as a child:

> It's about a relative I first met when I was 12. I fucking hate that bitch. She's the most evil, fucked-up person I've ever met in my whole life. She hated my guts. She did everything she could to make my life hell. Like, when I was sick she'd feed me tea with Tabasco, which is really hot pepper oil. She'd make me drink it by saying, 'You have to burn that cold out, boy.' Fucked-up shit like that. So every night when I'd go to sleep, I'd dream of killing that bitch. In some sick way I had a sexual fantasy about her, and I don't know what that stems from or why. But I always dreamt about fucking her and killing her.[43]

In this song we are again presented with a regression into memory, which at the outset distinguishes childhood as a distinct (past) period in the narrator's life, but which breaks down as the song progresses. Again the experience of childhood trauma is brought into the present life of the narrator, as indicated by the instability of tenses; at the beginning of the song we are presented with a clear regression and indication of the past tense, 'Now these memories fill my heart they bury me', but by the end of the song the use of the present tense in such lines as 'All I want to do is kill you' makes us aware of the instability of the boundary between child and adult. In this song as with the last, the language used in the revenge fantasy is both extremely violent and graphic:

[43] Interview with Steffan Chirazi, 'Heart of Darkness', Kerrang! October 19, 1996.

… The visions in my head
Were with you, with a knife up your ass, laying dead
So I pop some more caps in your ass,
Now your son is not so fun
Motherfucking bitch, never try to play me

Although this song, unlike 'Down With The Sickness', does not refer to physical abuse, in both the songs the anger of the child becomes increasingly threatening and malicious with the transposition into an adult frame of reference. Both the mix of tenses and the magnification of the experience of the child through the use of the adult body produce a threatening child figure, and one that encroaches upon the consciousness of the adult speaker.

The use of childhood imagery in Tairrie B's work is not especially pronounced, however there is one song in particular which is pertinent to the discussion here and provides another perspective on the Vengeful child figure. Tairrie B has recently talked in interview with *Metal Hammer* about her childhood experience of neglect and abuse by her mother, from whom she was removed at the age of 8,[44] and this autobiographical fact informs our reading of the Tura Satana song 'Break' from *All Is Not Well*. The use of tense is different in this song than in the previous examples – the singer identifies as a 'little girl' but this is integrated into the adult subject position and there is no shift in tense as we experience in 'Kill You' or 'Down With The Sickness'. The dream sequence however is still present:

I stay awake till three
I'm drowning in my sleep
I know the flesh is weak
I pray my soul to keep
I suffocate with grief
This monster will not leave
My nightmare's just begun

[44] 'My Life Story', *Metal Hammer* 180, July 2008, interview with Natasha Scharf.

I hate what I've become
Cos you made me
To break me

The reference to 'pray my soul to keep' is not only contingent with the use of religious references in Tairrie B's work, but is also a reference to the child's prayer 'Now I lay me down to sleep', and the middle section of the song contains another instance of the confession rhetoric ('forgive me father for I have sinned') that appears elsewhere in her work. The religious frame of reference is continued in the revenge fantasy which follows, which although it is violent, is notably not as graphic as in the two previous examples:

Why won't I shut my mouth
Cos you've got eyes like me
Why don't you shoot yourself
So someone dies for me mommy

The revenge fantasy is not carried out here, instead it turns back in on the subject, who risks losing control:

I try to fight but there's no use
Guess I was built for your abuse
Bodies bruised hands are cold
Vicious thoughts I can't control
Shed the demons of the past
Slit my wrists so they ask
What is real, what is fake
Pray to god I don't break

There is a strong contrast in the song between this feeling of vulnerability and the dominant and threatening position which the singer assumes towards the end of the song: 'Are you afraid of me? / I think that you should be'. The singer states that 'I live in misery / and sit there quietly', but also wishes that her mother would stab or kill herself 'so

someone dies for me'. The singer's reaction to her mother's attempts to apologise is one of bodily disgust: 'I'd rather swallow shit / Than you infecting me / I vomit constantly' and another call for her to sacrifice herself.

That the Vengeful child becomes a rhetorical device within this context refers back to the gothic theme of the sins of the fathers (or indeed mothers) being visited upon the children, although it undergoes a modulation here, as the child becomes a figure of vengeance. This desire for, or enactment of vengeance upon the part of the child is directly linked to the child's upbringing, and more generally the conduct of the parent or parent generation, where the child is explicitly characterised as 'the product of your conduct' (Slipknot, 'Welcome'). In this way the self-determination of the narrator-as-child is often subordinated to the desire for the destruction of or vengeance upon the parent – or rather, the latter is seen to be an integral part of the former. The body of the child, presented as malformed, grotesque, or as an aborted foetus – a recurrent image within the lyrics of both Manson and Slipknot, which has resonance as a symbol of unwanted children – embodies the effects of this alleged neglect on a wider scale.

The American Child

Generally speaking, within Popular Metal, the child presented in relation to the family unit (or lack thereof) is isolated with regard to other family members – siblings and extended family are rarely mentioned, if at all. The resulting focus on the parent-child relationship is manifest not only in specific examples, as I explored above, but also has resonance as a wider form of social criticism concerning the responsibilities of the adult generation towards the child, which is linked to anxiety concerning the notion of inheritance. This production of the child as an oppressed party speaks to the generalised themes of youth rebellion that run through much Rock and Metal, however, the characterisation of the relationship between parent and child, adult and youth, as one of abuse on such a scale is largely specific to this period, and to Popular Metal, as I have

suggested. Anxiety surrounding the safety of children and the vulnerability of children is one of the main influences upon Marilyn Manson's 'Childcatcher' persona concurrent with the *Portrait of An American Family* and *Smells Like Children* releases, a persona utilised to suggest the hypocrisy of a parent generation which blames Metal for damaging their children when it is suggested instead that the most damaging influence upon those children has been their parents.

Within the American cultural context, the identification of the child with the future is particularly significant in terms of national identity. The child becomes a highly charged site of the production of meaning through the development of a national selfhood, where there is a history of constituting the nation as a child, and the child as the ideal citizen of the nation. Carol J Singley and Caroline Field Levander argue in the introduction to the collection of essays entitled *The American Child* that 'the child operates as a particularly dense and contradictory site of meaning in a U.S. context' because 'the nation has variously attempted both to emulate the lines of blood and inheritance that define western European nations and to embrace the concept of independence that celebrates severance of the genealogical tree from its roots.' [45] Furthermore, they claim that America is distinctive

> in the ways that it has seized upon the image of the child in opposition to that which is constructed or institutionalised, and in the extent to which it has promoted the child as a force of resistance as well as innocent vulnerability. Such claims of potentiality and independence – and with them ongoing assertions of the right to self-invention; the entitlement to youthful, even reckless, adventure; and the pursuit of infinite possibility – align the nation with what is often taken for granted as the essence of childhood.[46]

[45]Carol J Singley and Caroline Field Levander eds. *The American Child: A Cultural Studies Reader* (Piscataway, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2003), p. 4.
[46] Singley & Levander eds. (2003), p 4-5.

The idea of America as a new man was famously espoused by RWB Lewis in *The American Adam*,[47] drawing on John De Crèvecoeur's investigation of the American character, of the 'new man', in *Letters From An American Farmer*. (The significance of Marilyn Manson's use of the ADAM figure in *Holy Wood* should be highlighted as the anthropomorphisation of the nation in this respect. In addition, the nation's 'loss of innocence' engendered by the assassination of John F Kennedy as used by Manson on that album garners increased significance from this association.) The identification of the nation with the child then does not simply pertain to the youth of the nation, but to its self-conscious inception as an ideological space identified with freedom of thought and severance from the what Singley and Levander characterise as 'the genealogical tree'. Lauren Berlant identifies the concept of 'infantile citizenship',[48] in which the representation of the child in popular culture is associated with the model citizen, willing to believe in the myth of the nation. Naivety is crucial to this theorisation, in that it is consistently undercut by the reality of political life. The model of infantile citizenship is simultaneously a scathing attack on a national ideology which stifles the development of the subject; a democracy which may also produce 'a special form of tyranny that makes citizens like children, infantilised, passive, and overdependent'[49] on the power of the state. The child is used, as it is within the gothic, to substantiate various moral and political arguments. This continues to be the case, for example with Caroline Levander's *Cradle of Liberty* in which the child is read in terms of racial politics.[50]

This identification of the child with nation and the development of a national selfhood dependent upon the figure of the child are made more complex by the notion of inheritance anxiety. With this phrase I mean to define those sets of fears surrounding the

[47] RWB Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955.)
[48] Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997)
[49] Berlant, p. 27, with reference to Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, vol. 1, 250-59, 336-37. Trans. Henry Reeve. Ed. Philips Bradley. (New York: Vintage, 1945.)
[50] Caroline Levander, *Cradle of Liberty: Race, The Child and National Belonging from Thomas Jefferson to WEB Du Bois*. (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006)

child's ability to live up to the expectations of the parents, and the parent's desire to provide for their children. To take an historical perspective: one may also locate this as having an intertextual relationship with the concept of the American Dream: as Jim Cullen explores, although 'explicit allegiance, not involuntary inheritance, is the theoretical basis of American identity', a 'core component' of the American dream is 'a notion that one's children might have a better life'.[51] Philip Greven stresses the centrality of the nuclear family to evangelical puritan ideology, and the concern expressed in their texts as to the influence of the parents upon the child, including an anxiety concerning the influence of grandparents. It would seem that the severance from the genealogical tree, and the definition of national identity against the heretic beliefs of old Europe, also translated into an anxiety concerning the family. Curiously, Cullen points out that as the Puritan community reached its second generation, 'a persistent mantra seems to run through the Puritans' copious commentaries: we are not the men our fathers were."[52] Steven Bruhm echoes this idea in his theory of parental modelling, for which he draws on Locke, Rousseau and Freud:

> The theories of Locke and Rousseau mark out a child very different from that of Freud; the former imagine an almost infinitely constructable *tabula rasa* that is opposed by Freud's biological and relational determinism. However, these three theorists can be brought together around one primary concept: the function of parental identification or incorporation through imitation as determining the child's personality and character.[53]

What is defined here, embedded within the notion of the American Dream and American national self-identity, is an anxiety surrounding generational inheritance. Thus the child that blames its parents, and vows vengeance upon them, as articulated through the figure of

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[51] Jim Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p 6 & 16.
[52] Cullen, p. 29.
[53] Steven Bruhm, work in progress, *The Gothic Child.* <http://faculty.msvu.ca/sbruhm/gothchild.htm> accessed July 2007.

the Vengeful child, can be seen to tap into specific issues of national ideology with regard to inheritance.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the figure of the child and childhood, frequently portrayed as a time of corrupted innocence, marked by abuse, neglect, and unhappiness, in which parental figures are unreliable in terms of comfort. The dual conception of the child, as both innocent and evil, victim and threat, is reflected here in the development of the figure of the Vengeful child.

Following on from the theory of the gothic monster in the previous chapter, and drawing on theories of the child in horror film and literature, I have suggested this model of the Vengeful child in the tradition of the Gothic child and the Evil Innocent. The figure of the Vengeful child is sometimes encountered with regard to the flashback or dream sequence, in which childhood abuse and trauma are revisited. This child figure is rendered especially threatening by the transposition of the child's voice into the adult's body.

Within the American cultural context, the child takes on added significance in terms of national ideology, and generational inheritance anxiety concerned with the American Dream. This is especially developed in the work of Marilyn Manson, who I shall now go on to discuss.

Chapter Five

Marilyn Manson

This chapter explores the figure of Marilyn Manson as a paradigmatic example of contemporary gothic subjectivity that has been the focus of my thesis. With particular reference to the use and development of symbolic entities in the triptych of albums *Antichrist Superstar*, *Mechanical Animals* and *Holy Wood* I will explore his approach to subjectivity as a figure inextricably bound to the mediatised culture within which it is produced and circulates. By examining his public presentation in press interviews, and use of visual imagery as well as lyrical analysis and reference to his autobiography, I will show how his approach to subjectivity is developed within the context of a late capitalist society dependent upon the mass media. Furthermore, it will be argued that the celebration of otherness which his work embodies is tied to notions of American national identity and as such functions as a critique of its dominant moral and social discourses.

In this chapter, the work that has been done previously on the major themes of the contemporary gothic, the body, the grotesque and monstrous, and the child, will be integrated into an analysis of Manson's work which looks specifically at the subjectivities he inhabits for each of his major albums in the specified time period. Following on from this, I suggest further theoretical contexts in which a reading of his work might be profitably developed. Manson's work is notable amongst that of his contemporaries for the extent to which the presentation of his own subjectivity is consciously or knowingly developed as an aesthetic response to his social and discursive context. This establishes a form of subjectivity which embraces the conflation of performer, artist and art. This positioning of the individual as text, of artist as art, a position which owes something to the tradition of performance art, shall be investigated by an examination of various personae, each of which are related to certain stages of Manson's career, and are accompanied by symbols which function as brand logos for art-as-subjectivity-as-commodity which is

furthered by his physical transformation during each period. Insofar as he participates in the contemporary American popular gothic, unearthing a monstrous past to the construction of the family and the nation, and focussing on instances of trauma, Manson is able to draw on forms of otherness which have particular resonance in terms of the dominant formations of safety, harm and risk, and its focus on the category of youth. The use of the figure of the child in his work has particular resonance with the notion of childhood and youth as signifiers of innocence, hope, and purity which take on national significance in the mythology of American national and personal identity. By subverting this image in particular, in the form of the revenge fantasy of the child developed through the Antichrist Superstar, and by presenting himself as the figurative child of American society, he carves a position for himself as an avenging and redemptive figure, a figure of both monstrosity and salvation.

Locating Marilyn Manson

Marilyn Manson was born Brian Warner in Canton, Ohio, on January 5th 1969 to parents Hugh and Barbara Warner. The band Marilyn Manson and the Spooky Kids, formed in 1989, later shortened their name to Marilyn Manson. Their first album *Portrait of an American Family* was released in 1994, produced by Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails, followed by the *Smells Like Children* EP in 1995. These records serve as a precursor to the success of *Antichrist Superstar*, released in 1996. This was followed by *Mechanical Animals* in 1998, *Holy Wood* in 2000, *The Golden Age of Grotesque* in 2003, and most recently *Eat Me Drink Me* in 2007, however it is *Antichrist Superstar* with which Manson is most commonly associated. Culturally Manson is associated primarily with youth and in particular the dispersed and diluted Goth subculture. In terms of genre, he is difficult to categorise accurately, in part because of the instability of the genre itself, and in part, because of the resistance to categorisation from within that culture. His work could be categorised as Rock, Goth, Metal, or Industrial. It should be remembered of course that

Manson's fame as an artist is not wholly based on his music, he is, in James Monaco's terms, a 'star' rather than a 'hero', where the 'star' is a figure whose fame exceeds that of the work with which they are associated.[1]

Although Manson uses gothic imagery and gothic themes, the Goth subculture does not wholly accept him, and his commercial success is to a certain extent at odds with Goth's resistance to mainstreaming, as explored in Chapter One. Joshua Gunn argues that this resistance to mainstreaming, or surfacing, is part of a 'socially constructed sense of alienation'[2], which is central to the Goth subculture's self-conception, and thus he is excluded partly on the basis of that success. It should however be remembered that Manson's work is based on a comparable sense of alienation from the mainstream – his work is informed by an intellectual elitism that he claims in his autobiography to have in common with Anton LaVey, 'politically correct because it doesn't judge people by race or creed but by the attainable, equal opportunity criterion of intelligence.'[3] This is reflected in his allusion to texts outwith his own work which the fan is encouraged to seek out – material concerned with, for example, gnosticism, the occult, the kabbalah, Masonic belief, and alchemy - and by the nature in which he presents himself as a text to be decoded. Manson's stated aim, as described in his autobiography (co-written with Neil Strauss) is described as follows: 'As a performer, I wanted to be the loudest, most persistent alarm clock I could be, because there didn't seem like any other way to snap society out of its Christianity and media-induced coma.'[4] What he suggests here is a manner in which to use the media rather than being used by it, to have control over a mediatised existence rather than being subject to control.

The name Marilyn Manson unites the glamorous and the violent, a dichotomy which can be argued to be central to the understanding of America which Manson brings to his work. Originally, the names of all band members were created with this same formula:

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[1] James Monaco, *Celebrity: The Media as Image Makers* (New York: Delta, 1978)
[2] Joshua Gunn, 'Marilyn Manson is not Goth: Memorial Struggle and the Rhetoric of Subcultural Identity', *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 23:4 (October 1999): 408-431. p 409
[3] Marilyn Manson and Neil Strauss, *The Long Hard Road Out of Hell*, (London: Plexus, 1998) p 168.
[4] Manson with Strauss, p 80.

the first name of their favourite female icon and the second name of a serial killer, although this formula has not always persisted through changes in personnel. Manson however remains the focus of the group's activities, and it is inescapable that whatever input the rest of the group have in the writing or performance of the songs, they will always be overshadowed by Manson. In terms of 'star' and 'hero' (or indeed 'anti-hero') status, Manson presents himself as an 'Other' to American society, although that relationship is one of symbiosis rather than pure opposition. The division between 'them and us', as well as Metal's traditional themes of alienation and oppression all inscribe the desire to assert difference, albeit within a commodity based culture. Difference is a circumscribed phenomenon in this sense, referring to the difference of the Alternative community from the mainstream, the difference of one community from another, couched though it is in images of the difference of the individual from others. The mainstream is an ambiguous concept, representing co-optation and crucially, inauthenticity. The definition and subsequent exclusion of the mainstream is central to the assertion of the individual, to define oneself as what one is not in the first instance. Manson creates – or rather becomes – what he sees as the ultimate other particular to American society. His existence as an artist is dependent on it, and he asserts that it has a similar kind of dependence upon him – that an evil other is required to assert good over evil, that there is a balance in a way then to his existence. In an interview with *Jam* magazine in 1995 he describes this as a conscious choice, and as a decision that was rooted in childhood experience:

> I was pumped full of fear…Fear about Armageddon, fear of going to Hell, fear of the devil coming to me in the middle of the night for listening to heavy metal music. When none of these things happened, one day I woke up and realized I couldn't believe in these things. I had to find an alternative to be a happy person. So I basically did everything I was told not to do. They told me not to listen to

> Black Sabbath, so I listened to them. I read a lot of taboo literature – Aleister Crowley and Anton LaVey.[5]

This choice is here linked with the fear that surrounds the taboo as a source of power. In this way the existence of Marilyn Manson as an artist is understood to be inextricably linked to the mainstream, the moral majority that object to him:

> The same people that are trying to bring down all the conservatism on us, all the political correctness, are the same people that created Marilyn Manson…They're the same people that raised me on caffeine, sugar, tobacco, alcohol, drugs, violence on TV, pornography. Now all of a sudden people can't handle it anymore. It's NutraSweet, PG13, less violence on TV. It's too late for that. They *made* Marilyn Manson. Marilyn Manson, to me, is a representation of my generation, my culture. By the same token, I think that that conservative mentality needs to exist for Marilyn Manson to exist. And if Marilyn Manson, and what it represents weren't here, they probably wouldn't be here either. We are reliant on each other.[6]

This dominant conservative 'they' are thus implicated in the creation of a world in which it is possible for a figure such as Marilyn Manson to exist, both undermining their position of moral authority, and establishing common ground with them – ultimately, he sees the world as no more desirable than they do. What Manson does is to position the popular cultural object as a product of an already existing state of affairs rather than the creator of it. In this sense he does also participate in a nostalgia for lost innocence, but asserts that progression comes not from censorship but from destruction, from a cultural apocalypse of which he positions himself as the harbinger. This apocalyptic mode of thought can be seen throughout his work (most explicitly in *Antichrist Superstar*) and is linked in his autobiography to his Christian school teaching:

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[5] In interview with Eric Snider, 'Confessions of an all American Antichrist', *Jam*, Feb 17th 1995. www.mansonusa.com/interviews/?by=era&view=poaaf/mm1995jam

[6] In interview with Eric Snider, 'Confessions of an All-American Anti-Christ', *Jam*, Feb 17th 1995.

> I was terrified that the end of the world was coming because they kept telling us [in Christian school] that the Antichrist was going to come, and to live you'd have to denounce Jesus or you'd be killed. And when that never happened, I finally realized that the Antichrist was something that was part of us all: it equals disbelief in Christianity. And I realized that the things that terrified me as a kid were things I was going to grow up to be. So now everyone's fear of the end of the world and this fear of the terrible Antichrist person is all coming true because of that fear itself…I am something that America has created out of its own fear.[7]

The evocation of the figure of the Antichrist, and its success, depends upon its placement within the mass media. At the same time that he denigrates these forms, they are used to disseminate his work, and he is reliant upon them to allow his own elevation to a level of popularity at which he is able to make such claims. The success of his artistic enterprise in this respect is dependent upon the achievement of a particular level of celebrity, and also, the problematisation of the assumed relationship between himself and his work – conflating the narrative persona, the media personality and the private self. Philip Auslander, building upon the three levels that Frith identified, argues that the levels are not always exclusive, for example, for those artists whose work is highly autobiographical. [8] In his discussion of David Bowie, Auslander encounters some difficulty with the terminology of character creation, positing Bowie's Ziggy Stardust, Aladdin Sane and Thin White Duke as 'named entities' instead of characters. Manson's incarnations as the Antichrist Superstar, Omega or Alien, Mercury and Arch Dandy of Dada can be viewed in a similar fashion, and given the uncertainty we hold around the notion of character, it is reasonable also to question as Auslander does 'whether it makes most sense to see these named entities as *characters* [the artist] plays and the [artist's star] identity as the *persona* that remains constant across these representations, or to see them as transformations of the [artist's star] persona itself.'[9] In the case of Bowie, Auslander argues for the former, on

[7] In interview with Sean Pulmer, 'Scary Monster, Super Freak' *Access*, November 1996.
[8] Philip Auslander, 'Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto' *Contemporary Theatre Review:* Vol. 14(1), 2004, 1-13, (p. 7.)
[9] Auslander, 'Performance Analysis', p. 7.

the basis that the artist is skilled in transformation, but admits that the latter may be possible. Another key reference point for Manson's work is Alice Cooper (real name Vincent Furnier), as a 'shock rocker' whose performances have historically been the subject of controversy – and who has always maintained a clear boundary between his onstage persona and his private life. The refusal on Manson's part to acknowledge such a distinction in his own work is representative of both the conflation of identity levels in his star persona and an attempt to resist an analysis of his work which would relegate the figure of Marilyn Manson to a character. Whilst Halnon argues that 'Fuck The Mainstream Music' 'may constitute a totalistic challenge to officialdom, but does so in ways that make little difference *outside* the music scene',[10] Manson appears to make an attempt to cross that line. For other artists whose work I have studied, first-person authenticity is constructed by an attempt to reveal the private self, or to use character as a transformative property within performance, but which ultimately leads back to the private self. In contrast, Manson's work is invested in the 'character', such that the private self is enveloped by it.

Manson as a Contemporary Gothic Subject

Although the main focus of this chapter will be upon the symbols that Manson has used to define himself during the high point of his work so far, it is necessary before doing that to explore a little more of the content of his work. There are many ways in which the figure of Marilyn Manson is an exaggerated and stylised form of the contemporary gothic subject such that we have seen in the work of the other artists under discussion here. The primary difference between his work and the work of the other artists I have examined thus far lies in the use and figuration of the child, and the extent to which this is developed in his work to refer to the American national context. As we have seen, Manson is explicit in

[10] Halnon, p 462.

positioning himself as the ultimate other or monster in an American society which he portrays as grotesque, and of which he sees himself as a product.

This position as the monster/antichrist figure emerges in the album *Antichrist Superstar*, but there are indications in his early work of how this will progress. In 'Cake and Sodomy', the opening song to *Portrait of an American Family*, Manson declares himself to be the 'God of Fuck', (a phrase associated with Charles Manson) and immediately positions himself as antagonist to a certain section of American society:

> VCRs and Vaseline, TV-fucked by plastic queens
> Cash in hand and dick on screen, who said god was ever clean?
> Bible-belt round Anglo-waste, putting sinners in their place
> Yeah right great if you're so good explain the shit stains on your face
> White trash get down on your knees, time for cake and sodomy

Whilst this song exudes confidence, there is certainly still a strong element of self-hate and self-doubt in his work. In 'Organ Grinder' both this and the 'Childcatcher' persona are displayed: 'what I want, what I want is just your children / I hate what I have become to escape what I hated being'. This song is also significant because it frames Manson as a character, something which is absent from his later work: 'I wear this fucking mask because you cannot handle me'. This is a theme that is continued in 'Dope Hat', which places the singer in the position of a child's entertainer, and in which the 'darkness' of his world is beginning to take over:

> I peek into the hole, I struggle for control
> The children love the show
> But they fail to see the anguish in my eyes…
> …I scratch around the brim, I let my mind give in
> The crowd begins to grin
> But they seem to scream when darkness fills my eyes…
> …My big top tricks will always make you happy
> But we all know the hat is wearing me…

By the time we come to *Antichrist Superstar* Manson more fully inhabits the role of Rock star hate figure, for example in opening lines of 'Irresponsible Hate Anthem':

> I am so all-American, I'd sell you suicide
> I am totalitarian I've got abortions in my eyes
> I hate the hater I'd rape the raper
> I am the animal who would not be himself

The references in these lines position Manson as a hate figure, but with this song, as is implied in the title, there is an element of an ironic stance. The bombast of these lines can be compared to the chorus of 'Tourniquet':

> Take your hatred out on me
> Make your victim my head
> You never ever believed in me
> I am your tourniquet

Here, in a song which is both slower and quieter than 'Irresponsible Hate Anthem', the vengeful stance evoked in that song is absent. Instead we are presented with an image of a scapegoat, possessed of a self-awareness of the necessity of his role.

The song 'Kinderfeld' occupies a curious position on this album. The song occurs at the end of the second section of the album, and represents the final stage of transformation for the 'worm' into the Antichrist Superstar, and there are a number of different voices speaking – these are referenced in the lyric booklet and not represented by different singers. There is a clear autobiographical link to Manson's childhood in the song, one of the voices 'Jack' is inspired by his grandfather, Jack Warner, whose basement is described in Manson's autobiography as a source of terror. His grandfather had a train set in the basement that he would turn on, to hide the sound of his masturbation, and Manson describes finding pornographic material and sex aids in the basement as a child. It would

seem that the song links Manson's childhood experience of fear and the taboo to his desire as an adult to become a source of fear:

> He lives inside my mouth
> And tells me what to say
> When he turns the trains on
> He makes it go away
> The hands are cracked and dirty and
> The nails are beetle wings…
>
> …[The worm] Tell me something beautiful
> Tell me something free
> Tell me something beautiful
> And I wish that I could be…
>
> …[The inauguration of the worm] Then I got my wings
> And I never even knew it
> When I was a worm
> Thought I couldn't get through it

The line 'something beautiful / something free' evokes both the process of transformation, and a loss of innocence. The phrase is used in the same way in the song 'The Beautiful People'. The notion of childhood fear is expressed through the portrayal of 'Jack' as a figure with 'cracked' hands and 'beetle wings', and who has control over the 'worm' figure. Towards the end of the song a new voice appears: 'voice we have not heard before', which I suggest is the voice of the Antichrist Superstar, the 'Disintegrator' of the third art of the album's title. 'Disintegrator Rising':

> Because today is black
> Because there is no turning back
> Because your lies have watered me
> I have become the strongest weed

I would suggest that it is this voice which also appears later in the album, in the song 'Minute of Decay'. This song strongly evokes the notions of emptiness and numbness characteristic of the contemporary gothic subject:

> There's not much left to love
> Too tired today to hate
> I feel the empty
> I feel the minute of decay…
> …A lack of pain
> A lack of hope

In addition to this we also see the destruction of the future as a symbolic construct, and the effect upon the individual: 'I've looked ahead and saw a world that's dead / I guess that I am too.'

The sense of deadness, numbness or dissociation is particularly strong on the album *Mechanical Animals*, which opens with 'Great Big White World':

> But I'm not attached to your world
> Nothing heals and nothing grows
>
> 'Cause it's a great big white world
> And we are drained of our colours
> We used to love ourselves
> We used to love one another

Elsewhere on the album the relationship with pain is explored in more detail. The songs 'The Speed of Pain' and 'Fundamentally Loathsome' use a similar chorus section that describes this uncertain relationship with pain and emotion. In 'The Speed of Pain' the singer refers to a relationship that has ended, the 'it' of this song referring to pain:

> When you want it

It goes away too fast
When you hate it
It always seems to last
Just remember when you think you're free
The crack inside your fucking heart is me

To compare, in 'Fundamentally Loathsome':

I want to wake up in your world
With no pain
But I'll just suffer in a hope to die someday
While you are numb all of the way

When you hate it you know you can feel but
When you love you know it's not real

And I am resigned to this wicked fucking world
On its way to hell
The living are dead and
I hope to join them too

It is interesting that in this song, 'negative' emotions are given a degree of value which 'positive' emotions cannot attain. Whilst this refers to an extent to heartbreak, it also shows the manner in which pain helps construct a reality for the contemporary gothic subject, where pleasure cannot perform the same function.

On the *Holy Wood* album, Manson positions himself as spokesperson for a generation in much the same way that Slipknot do in their work, however where their work concentrates on violence meted out to unseen oppressors, *Holy Wood*, released after the Columbine shootings (which I shall discuss in more detail at a later point) focuses more upon unearthing the violence which he sees as inherent in American society. The international tour that accompanied this album was called the 'Guns, God and Government' tour, a phrase that comes from 'The Love Song'. The inner sleeve notes to this song indicate that it is a dialogue between 'The Bullet' and 'The Father', ostensibly an

exchange between parent and child, although there is clearly a double meaning in 'Father' in reference to God. The song combines images of Christianity and of gun culture, juxtaposing the pacifist and the violent. For example, whereas 'Mother says that we should look away' – a phrase that recalls the Christian idea of 'turning the other cheek' – the voice of the father asks 'Do you love your guns? (yeah) / God? (yeah) / The government? (fuck yeah)', conjuring a patriarchal, conservative Christian America. The line 'she tells me I'm a pretty bullet / an Imitation Christ' shows how this juxtaposition is focussed on the image of the child, as both a child of God and a weapon. The themes of religion, death and nation state are perhaps stronger on this album than any other: Manson uses the rhetoric of sin and damnation in a way that is familiar from the evocation of the grotesque world of the contemporary gothic subject, for instance, in 'A Place in the Dirt':

> We are damned and we are dead
> All god's children to be sent
> To our perfect place in the sun
> And in the dirt
> There's a windshield in my heart
> We are bugs so smeared and scarred

This use of language also recalls Nine Inch Nails' use of religious vocabulary pertaining to sin; however here, Manson positions himself as a Christ-like figure. Again this is particular to the American context: as this figuration is further overlaid with references to the Kennedy assassination:

> Put me in the motorcade
> Put me in the death parade
> Dress me up and take me
> Dress me up and make me
> Your dying god
> Now we hold the 'ugly head'
> The mary-whore is at the bed

They've cast the shadow of our perfect death
In the sun and in the dirt

The reference to the 'mary-whore' casts Jackie Onassis as Mary Magdalene at the scene of the crucifixion of Christ, and 'ugly head' refers to the Gaelic translation of 'Kennedy'. It is worth noting here that the Kennedy reference is not new to his work at this point: Manson played the role of an assassination victim in the video for 'Coma White' from *Mechanical Animals* in a scene which strongly recalls the Kennedy assassination.

The last example from *Holy Wood* that I will discuss is 'Burning Flag'. Again, we are presented with a song that combines elements of self hate with a vacillation between alienation and community, where the subject is split between self and other:

I'll join the crowd that
Wants to see me dead
Right now I feel I belong
For the first time

The song contains a powerful amalgamation of images concerning America and the child as national subject:

We got our A. B. Cs and our F. U. C. K.
We are all just stars and we're waiting
We are all just scarred and we're hating
We are all just stars on your burning flag

Here the image of the burning flag is a particularly potent symbol of anti-American feeling.

On *The Golden Age of Grotesque* Manson's persona is that of the 'Arch Dandy of Dada', and the album's themes and imagery draw largely on pre-Nazi Weimar Berlin.[11]

[11] Mel Gordon, author of *Voluptuous Panic: The Erotic World of Weimar Berlin* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2000) has said in interview with Rusirius radio that Manson contacted him during the *GAOG* period,

Significantly, the album is concerned very little with the critique of Christianity which is so central to his previous albums. Also in contrast to his earlier work is the approach to gender taken on this album and its associated imagery, which concentrates on a heteronormative masculinity which is radically different from the androgynous figure of the alien / angel associated with *Mechanical Animals*. However, there are some key continuities, including the erosion of the future as a symbolic construct, as is addressed in 'This Is The New Shit':

> Everything has been said before
> There's nothing left to say anymore
> When it's all the same
> You can ask for it by name…
> …Are you motherfuckers ready
> For the new shit?
> Stand up and admit
> Tomorrow's never coming

This nihilism is also addressed in 'The Bright Young Things':

> We'll be the worms in your apple pie
> Fake abuse for our bios
> Blacken our own eyes
> The grass isn't greener on the other side
> We set it on fire
> And we have no reason why
> Set fashion, not follow
> Spit vitriol, not swallow
> We're good for nothing but being
> Everything that's bad…
> …We know who we are and what we want to say
> And we don't care who's listening

---

concerned that he might be sued as he had drawn many themes from the album from the book. Gordon was unconcerned, pleased that an academic book would be the subject of a record likely to be so popular. <http://www.rusiriusradio.com/2006/06/20/show-49-the-hipster-whores-of-weimar-germany-mel-gordon-pt-2/> accessed July 08.

We don't rebel to sell
It just suits us well
We're the bright young things…
…Perpetual rebellion with absolutely no cause

Another key continuity is Manson's self-presentation as a hate figure, which he deals with in 'Better of Two Evils':

I won't look prettier if I smile for the picture
Motherfuckers never liked me then and they sure won't like me now…
…Haters call me bitch
Call me faggot call me whitey
But I'm something that you'll never be
I'll be your scapegoat, I'll be your saviour
I'm the better of two evils

The elements of self-hate or self-doubt that were present on the previous albums are certainly not in evidence here, so much as is the formulation of hate and opposition as a stylistic choice. In the title track 'The Golden Age of Grotesque' where Manson depicts the 'Low Art Gloominati' as the inhabitants of a period of excess and of simulation:

We're the LOW ART GLOOMINATI
And we aim to depress
The SCABARET SACRILEGENDS[12]
This is the Golden Age of Grotesque

Manson again presents himself as a leader or spokesperson, using a mix of the decadent and the nihilistic, and very firmly situating the world around him as one of the grotesque. In the online journal that was part of his website during the period that the album was released, this world of the grotesque was very clearly linked to his view of America:

[12] The capitalisation here reproduces that which occurs in the cover notes for the album.

> It became quite clear that the critical role for an artist, particularly an American one, is to ensure that our soldiers are risking their lives to defend a country that is worth living in. But how can the irreconcilable extremes of Marilyn Manson fit into this time of political upheaval when I have rarely believed in the behaviour of the government? How can I be a proud American, when America has done its best to destroy me?
>
> SIMPLE---Isn't this the very core of what the two words 'Marilyn' and 'Manson' have represented from the beginning? If the U.S. stands for democracy and freedom, then the most patriotic thing an artist can do is to fight for those liberties. My opinion is a sharpened stick, poking democracy to make sure that it's not dead…
>
> …Idea for a Hallmark card: 'America needs Marilyn Manson as much as Marilyn Manson needs America.' Romantic isn't it? [13]

However, perhaps the key event which shaped Manson's notoriety in the mainstream media was the school shooting which occurred in Columbine in 1999, which I shall now go on to discuss.

The Columbine Shootings and American Moral Panic

On 20th April 1999, two high school students in Ohio shot and killed a number of their classmates and then themselves in an incident which was widely reported in the national and international news media. Initial reports of the incident made a connection between the students' 'Goth' look, Manson's music and the motivations for the shootings, an association which despite subsequent refutation has ensured a lasting link between Manson and Columbine. In his article 'Marilyn Manson is not Goth!' Joshua Gunn references interviews with neighbours and fellow students stating that the boys were part of a group called the Trenchcoat Mafia, a group of students who wore black leather jackets

[13] Posted 21st April 2003 on www.marilynmanson.com. This version of the site is no longer available.

and who listened to Rock, Metal or Goth music.[14] Although students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were later shown not to have been fans of Manson, there followed a moral panic in America concerning the Goth subculture, and scapegoating popular culture for this corruption of youthful innocence. Columbine became a flashpoint for the discussion of violence in America and its effect on youth, a discussion in which, amongst other factors, the effects of violent video games and Rock or Metal music were suggested as being causal factors. Although subsequent attention has been directed toward the assumptions that led to the initial Manson link, notably in Michael Moore's documentary film concerned with gun crime in America, *Bowling For Columbine*, and to other potential motivations for the killings, it is an incident which shall remain at least partially associated with Marilyn Manson. There have been at least two other more recent violent incidents with which the figure of Manson has been associated – the murder of Jodi Jones in Scotland in 2003, for which her boyfriend Luke Mitchell was convicted, and the shooting at SuccessTech Academy in Cleveland, Ohio, in October of 2007, carried out by 14 year old Asa H. Coon, which Manson referenced in his 2008 live tour.

George Plasketes, in his 1999 article 'Things to do in Littleton When You're Dead: A Post Columbine Collage', places the media scapegoating of Manson, video games and violent films firmly in the tradition of moral panic surrounding popular culture:

> Predictably, the media, music, popular culture finger pointing began almost instantaneously, those perceived evils preceding virtually any and all accountability elsewhere, including parents, friends, antidepressants, guns, law enforcement, schools, or obvious but ignored warning signs…This tired view is so convenient, so simplistic, so morally arrogant… During the 1990s, the decline of civilization (homogenous, white, middle-class suburbia, aka Pleasantville) has been blamed on lingering liberal counterculture values; purple Teletubbies with magic bags; animated antagonists like the South Parkers and Beavis and Butthead, who were apparently responsible for, among other bad behaviours, making unsupervised children burn down their trailer in Ohio; Marilyn Manson; Ice T; and rap music.

[14] Joshua Gunn, 'Marilyn Manson is not Goth'

> Before that it was Madonna, metal, and MTV. And before that the Beatles, backmasking, Elvis's gyrations, rockabilly, the blues, swing. Yadda, yadda, yadda.[15]

Plasketes' frustration with the predictability of the media response to the shootings is indicative of the degree to which such accusations have become cliché, especially with regard to the music industry, more specifically with Metal, and of the manner in which this form of rebellion and responses to it can be historicized, demystified and the cultural formation of those reactions exposed. After the incident at Columbine, Marilyn Manson became at least for a short time a folk devil in the style that Stanley Cohen has described, a figure who represents deviance, and whose representation as such is brought about by the mass media, who over-report the situation to the point of stereotype. Cohen devotes much of his study of the Mods and Rockers to the role of the mass media in creating moral panics and folk devils, the folk devil a type of person that society erects as 'visible reminders of what we should not be.'[16] Also crucial here is the concept of deviation amplification which he builds on to show how the demonisation of one group of supposed deviants alienates them and amplifies their own self-conception as deviant.[17] This has particular relevance to Manson's self-conception as the ultimate folk devil, as taking on the role of the deviant as a stylistic form. It is largely for this demonisation, a role in which the artist is complicit in its currency, that Manson has been featured in academic as well as popular writing. Manson has been received with curiosity, the subject of a handful of articles in prominent journals such as *Popular Music* and *Popular Music and Society*, as well others not directly concerned with music or popular culture.[18] Plaskete's article quoted above was part of a collection of articles featured in *Popular Music and Society* in the wake of the Columbine killings, and its tone is generally representative of the rest.

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[15] George Plasketes, 'Things to Do in Littleton When You're Dead: A Post Columbine Collage', *Popular Music and Society*, (1999) 23:3, 9-24, p.14-15.
[16] Cohen, Stanley. *Folk devils and moral panics: The Creation of the Mods and the Rockers*. (Routledge, London: 1972; 3rd. edn 2002) p 2.
[17] Stanley Cohen, p 8-9.
[18] For example Paul Smeyers and Bert Lambeir's article '*Carpe Diem*: Tales of Desire and the Unexpected' in the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*. Vol 35, No. 2. 2001 pp 281-297.

Robert Wright's excellent article places, as does Plaskete's, the media reaction to Manson as part of a tradition that pathologises the link between popular culture and the corruption of youth, with reference to the accusation that Rock music can cause teenage suicide. [19] Wright argues that censorship of music in the US has become insipid, manifesting itself as common sense, as dismissal, and that the 'impulse to silence music…is linked to a generalised and seemingly intractable youth crisis, *the cultural symptoms of which have become inextricably confused within popular discourse with their root social, economic and psychological causes.*'[20] Drawing on Lawrence Grossberg and Jacques Attali, Wright argues that in the US, this confusion manifests itself as the moral panic and drive to conformity such that we witness in the reaction to Marilyn Manson. Furthermore, he asserts that Manson 'has played what Jacques Attali would call a "prophetic" role in this crisis by painstakingly deconstructing its discursive elements and subverting them with an almost sadistic delight.'[21] Wright draws on psychological evidence to depict the state of crisis surrounding youth since the 1980s, particularly the rising rate of teenage suicide. (In 1996, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, in a review of the last ten years of research on childhood and adolescent depression, noted that the rate of teenage suicide had quadrupled since 1950. According to a similar review, covering the years 1993-2003, that number has now steadily decreased, a change attributed in part to the increasing numbers of children and adolescents who are prescribed anti-depressants.)[22] Surveying psychological and psychiatric literature on the subject, he notes that any link with themes in Rock or Metal music is absent, in contrast to what groups such as the Parents Music Resource Centre (PRMC) have argued. With regard to Manson, he is concerned to point out that although there is both violence and a general sense of darkness

[19] Wright, Robert. '"I'd sell you suicide": Pop Music and Moral Panic in the Age of Marilyn Manson' *Popular Music*, 19:3 (2000), 366-385.
[20] Wright, p 366. Emphasis in text.
[21] Wright. p 366.
[22] Boris Birmaher et al, 'Childhood and Adolescent Depression: A Review of the Past Ten Years', *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 35:11 (November 1996), 1427-1439 (p. 1429), and Madelyn S. Gould et al, 'Youth Suicide Risk and Preventative Interventions: A Review of the Past Ten Years', *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 42:4 (April 2003), 386-405, (p. 388)

in the music it is 'not intended to induce self-destructive behaviour but on the contrary, to inspire strength and independence'[23] and suggests that Manson, in his ironic critical stance, is a modernist rather than postmodernist, in his wish 'not merely to destroy but to liberate.'[24] In terms of Wright's analysis, I would argue that Manson attempts in his work to dispel the confusion between the cultural symptoms and the social and psychological causes of the crisis in youth by challenging American national myth.

In discussing a crisis in youth I would refer back to those sociological texts discussed in the Introduction which were concerned with a crisis of childhood, and my ensuing discussion of the figure of the child as a potent symbol in American culture. In addition, I would like to again refer back to the discourses of self-harm and self hate discussed in chapter three of this study. The link made between a preference for 'dark' music and incidences of mental health issues in the young is discussed by Wright in terms of claims that Rock music can cause teen suicide:

> The clinical evidence on teen suicide confirms what common sense has suggested from the outset: that young people's sometimes obsessive identification with violent themes in Rock music is, if anything, symptomatic of deeper and far more profound social and psychic dislocation in their lives. That the advocates of censorship continue to confuse a passion for 'dark' music with a disposition to suicide is a measure not only of their ideological tenacity but – even more pitifully – of a more generalised refusal to admit that the lives of young people are highly stressful, and that their problems truly have become *critical*. It may be comforting to retreat into a 1950s-era fantasy of well-adjusted children untroubled families and happy schools, or to take refuge in the wistful nostalgia that now passes for mainstream musical culture in North America but, in the meantime, the evidence that young people are in serious trouble mounts inexorably. For anyone who might be listening, Marilyn Manson really means it when he sings 'You've poisoned all your children / To camouflage your scars.'[25]

[23] Wright, p 375.
[24] Wright, p 398-9.
[25] Wright, p 381

Wright's analysis of the clinical evidence echoes the recent study by Young, Sweeting and West in which claims for the association of incidences of self harm among youths that self-identified as Goth were linked to the notion of a support network rather than being a causative factor in their self harm. What Wright indicates is that Manson places the blame for the mental and emotional crisis of youth with the failure of the parent generation, something echoed by Manson in a journal entry on his website from 2003:

> Let me remind you that the deformed scar of one man, is 'love's pretty dimple' to me. The generation that lived through WWII accepted the concept of 'total violence' as a solution to the world's problems. The mathematics of creative suffering and the milk of human violence are the formulas that our grandparents bottled and passed down to our parents.
>
> These are the 'traditional' values that have built 'protective' moral walls around our children's world. And it is, indeed, a small world after all.[26]

Both Wright and Manson articulate a position in which the parent generation, rather than popular culture, are responsible for a crisis of youth, and for Manson, a situation in which any discussion of violence is subject to a double standard given the level of violence which he sees as existing in American life. As I have argued, acts of consensual violence within Alternative culture appear on a spectrum, which I believe includes body modification as well as self-harm and involvement in high-risk participatory behaviour at concerts such as the mosh pit. What is interesting is the manner in which youth orientated Popular Metal as I have described can be seen to interact with this spectrum of consensual violence on different terms to that of the parent generation, in an attempt to gain control over the body as a form of resistance and of self-actualisation. As I argued in Chapter Two, control over the body becomes identified with the struggle to articulate subjectivity.

As a form of participation in the modern American popular gothic, I would argue that what is being challenged here is the dominant social formation of safety, harm and

[26] www.marilynmanson.com/journal accessed March 2003. Page no longer active.

risk. Drawing on alternative forms of sanctioned knowledge, such as the Occult and Satanism, and by using the power of those forms, he issues a challenge to those codes of behaviour influenced by Christian morality. In setting out a subjectivity which works to a different conception of safety-harm-risk, he seeks to de-naturalise their effects. The particular image upon which he focuses in this respect is that of the child.

Groups such as the Parents' Music Resource Centre (PMRC) and American Family Association (AFA), loosely representative of the American Christian right wing, have fixed upon a range of artists, Manson included, whose work they believe to be harmful. The discourse upon which they focus in this respect is the corruption of children, the harm that popular culture can do society, and in particular, the child. The child has become a symbol of uncorrupted innocence, a symbol that comes to stand for the ability of the parental generation to care for them, rather than the child itself. There are many instances in which Manson distorts the iconic image of the child, and which usage contrasts to that employed by Korn or Slipknot, for example. The work of the latter groups uses the subject position of the child to effect a catharsis through the figure of the revenging child in their work, and as I have argued previously, the incongruity of the adult body using the voice of the child is a key factor in disrupting the association of innocence. Manson's songs do not use the same type of revenge regression that these artists do, rather he presents himself as a leader of this army of avenging children, as a damaged child but also an alternate parental figure or saviour. In so doing he is presenting his subjectivity not as controlled by the adult world, but as possessed of the ability to disrupt it. *Antichrist Superstar*, perhaps most clearly of all Manson's work, depicts the power of the embodiment of society's faults as its harshest critic, his purpose in this respect to insist on the importance of challenging social boundaries within the realms of art. In an interview in 2003 in *The Observer*, it was suggested to Manson that he must have known that the reaction to his work would be extreme, to which he replied: 'I looked at it more that America had a hole that Marilyn Manson needed to fill…It's essential to be extreme in order for the reaction to be extreme.

I provoke people because art's meant to be a question mark.'[27] Rather than indirectly approaching youth crisis, he firmly positions any such crisis as the result – perhaps even the embodiment – of the anxiety of the parent generation, and out of which crisis he emerges as a Christ-like figure of salvation, and revenge.

Logo and Subject

Having analysed the factors in Manson's work that are familiar from the model of contemporary gothic subjectivity I have so far put forward, I intend to examine the manner in which Manson's personality is identified with the artwork he presents. I would suggest that this presentation should be contextualised both in terms of the artist becoming the artwork as is displayed in various forms of performance art (as discussed in Chapter Two), and in terms of Richard Dyer's theorisation of the celebrity, not as 'hero' but as 'star'. Manson has employed a strong use of visual imagery throughout his career to date, especially so with the use of symbols to represent periods of his work and particular manifestations of character. These symbols also function as representative entities of the body of intellectual work that lies behind each album. In particular, this applies to the triptych of albums *Antichrist Superstar*, *Mechanical Animals* and *Holy Wood*. The albums prior to and following these display the same use of character and logo to some extent, however it is in these three in which this approach is most developed. (With the most recent album, *Eat Me Drink Me*, this approach is not in evidence at all.) These logo-characters represent a considered and developed approach to subjectivity in a mediatised society, in which the artist and the artwork are so closely aligned as to represent an exaggerated form of the public persona and a reflection on the performance of everyday life. The cover art for *Lest We Forget*, a greatest hits compilation released in 2004, includes the following illustration:

[27] The Observer, May 4th, 2003. 'I was kind of a disturbed kid'.

Image has been removed due to copyright restrictions[28]

These symbols are associated with *Antichrist Superstar*, *Mechanical Animals*, *Holy Wood*, and *The Golden Age Of Grotesque* respectively. Interestingly, although elsewhere in the cover art images from the *Portrait of an American Family* and *Smells Like Children* eras are used, and songs from them do feature on the album, they are not represented here. The choice to exclude his earlier work while prioritising these symbols is notable. Those earlier records have neither a symbol nor a distinctive 'character' associated with them, and whilst there are allusions to a figure who is a mixture of Willy Wonka (from the 1971 film) and the Childcatcher from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (1968), it is not as explicit as those he later develops. I would argue that these symbols each function in the same manner as a brand or logo, representing both the album and artist by distillation, as shorthand. By positioning these symbols as brands I wish to foreground the conscious play on the power of the circulation of the image within the mass media, of the logo as the distillation of the essence of the thing represented. The logo is the pinpoint by which the consumer navigates his or her consumption. The logo is in this sense performative, and its use here draws attention to the work of art as commodity, recalling the tension between art and business inherent in the music industry. The use of the logo in popular music marketing is commonplace, however it is usual for these to incorporate the name of the

[28] Image taken from the inside cover of *Lest We Forget.*

band or artist, and this is something we only see with the last of these, *The Golden Age of Grotesque*. All the others are pictorial, and much more complex in their range of reference. It is the only one to refer directly to Marilyn Manson rather than the character entity with which it is associated. This more conventional use of a logo is mirrored in the structure of the album itself, which does not follow the concept model that the others ostensibly follow. The integration of the symbol and its meaning into the text of the album is much stronger in those first three, indeed they are drawn together as a 'Triptych' as Manson has described them. I have chosen to focus particularly on the first three of these symbols as the most developed form of integration of character and symbol in Manson's work to date. To this end, and in order to further develop my discussion of the significance of this form of representation I shall now spend some time examining these symbol-characters in more detail.

Antichrist Superstar

The first of the symbol-characters which I shall examine is that associated with *Antichrist Superstar*. The album traces in three sections (The Hierophant, Inauguration of the Worm and Disintegrator Rising) a semi-autobiographical account of Manson's rise to fame, a journey from Wormboy to the avenging angel figure of the Antichrist Superstar. This transformation is referred to in the album artwork, which shows a filmstrip of Manson developing from the worm to the winged angel figure in crucifixion pose. Identifiable in the artwork are excerpts from Isaiah 66, particularly the section denoting 'their worm shall not die.' The worm is an image resonant in the work of both Blake and Nietszche, and connects the figure here with the debasement and devaluing of human life which we see in other contemporary acts' use of insects, such as such as Slipknot's use of the maggot image. For Blake, in the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, the worm signified the cancer at the heart of the sick rose, as that which devours. With Nietzsche in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* the worm is a developmental stage of man: 'You have made your way from

worm to man, and much in you is still worm.'[29] The image on the cover of the album, the image of the receiving of wings that is prefigured in 'Cryptorchid':

> Prick your finger it is done
> The moon has now eclipsed the sun
> The angel has spread its wings
> The time has come for bitter things

and also in 'Wormboy' indicate such a developmental transition, and one which, in 'Wormboy', inspires fear: 'the world shudders as the worm gets its wings'. The image of wings is also a reference to angels: included in the cover art are various permutations of the Tetragrammaton used in occult philosophy to summon and banish angels. These permutations are variations on the unsayable name of God arranged around a circle, the different angels being associated with different ways in which to draw the connecting points. The connection of the four points in some variations mirrors the shock symbol that is used on the album artwork, on the CD itself and that is the basis of the first symbol. The variation of the Tetragrammatical summoning that is depicted on the back cover, and from which the shock symbol for the first album is partially derived, is the one which spells Leviathan, another name for Satan. These references to wings and angels thus suggest development, and also place the figure of the angel in the context of the occult. This transformation and development are couched in apocalyptic terms, which lead on to Manson's identification with the figure of the Antichrist.

His usage of the term 'Antichrist' plays on its symbolic function within Christianity:

> After years of studying the concept, I began to realize that the Antichrist is a character – a metaphor – who exists in nearly all religions under different names, and maybe there is some truth in it, a need for such a person. But from another

[29] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961) p 46.

> perspective, this person could be seen not as a villain but a final hero to save people from their own ignorance… When my dreams about the Antichrist began occurring more frequently later in life, I knew I was that figure.[30]

In terms of religious dogma, the figure of the Antichrist into a single anthropomorphic figure who will herald the apocalypse has significant purchase within a section of American cultural thought, specifically that which pertains to the cultural phenomenon of naming the Antichrist, of defining an enemy or folk devil. Robert Fuller has documented this in his book *Naming the Antichrist*, and positions this concern as an obsession that is concerned with the categorisation of absolute good and evil. For Manson then to raise the image of Satan, using apocalyptic terms, asserting an avenging but also redemptive figure is to consciously situate the himself within this socio-religious context. To inhabit this position, to claim to be created by the society which names it as evil, and then to claim a redemptive status as a 'final hero' is an attempt to unsettle the moral certainty which underlies those discourses denoting 'good' and 'evil'.

The images of transformation are mirrored in Manson's own commentary on the album in an interview in 1996, where he makes reference to both the philosophies of Nietzsche and Aleister Crowley: 'It's like the Superman theory that Nietzsche had…I think every man and woman is a star. It's just a matter of realizing it and becoming it.'[31] This passing reference to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *The Book of the Law* draws our attention to the importance of self-overcoming and transformation in the album. The influence of Nietzsche on Manson can be seen again in the epigraph used for his autobiography:

> In a stronger age than this decaying, self-doubting present, he must yet come to us, the redeeming man, of great love and contempt, the creative spirit whose

[30] Marilyn Manson, with Neil Strauss, *The Long Hard Road out of Hell* (Plexus, London: 1998), p213. Elsewhere in the book Manson describes the importance to him of dreams, and the manner in which he believes that they have shown his future.
[31] Pulmer, Sean. 'Scary Monster, Super Freak', *Access*, Nov 1996. www.mansonusa.com/interviews/?by=era&view=as/mm1996access

> compelling strength will not let him rest in any aloofness or any beyond, whose isolation is misunderstood by the people as if it were flight from reality – while it is only his absorption, immersion, penetration into reality, so that, when he one day emerges again into the light, he may bring home the redemption of this reality; its redemption from the curse that the hitherto reigning ideal has laid upon it. The man of the future, who will redeem us not only from the hitherto reigning ideal but also from that which was bound to grow out of it, the great nausea, the will to nothingness, nihilism; this bell-stroke of noon and of the great decision that liberates the will again and restores its goal to the earth and his hope to man; this Antichrist and antinihilist; this victor over god and nothingness – he must come one day.[32]

The use of this quote to preface the book, which is much of a partner piece to the album, is not without significance. These references to Nietzsche's Overman and to the Antichrist, allied with the development of the Antichrist Superstar and Manson's prophetic self-mythologisation, suggest a figure who is capable of destroying his old self and the world around him, a figure who is able to liberate, to usher in a new age. However, the possibility of such a figure existing is also regarded with horror: as is seen in the song '1996', 'anti people now you've gone too far / here's your Antichrist Superstar'. The last line of '1996' indicates this paradoxical standpoint between the necessity of his appearance and the nostalgia for a world where he would not be required: 'anti people and anti me / I don't deserve a chance to be.' The redemptive qualities of the figure are also important here, as Manson is presenting himself as a leader, not just the destroyer but as a creative force, and also as a saviour. The redemptive possibilities of the figure are also shown in the last, untitled song on the album, where the Antichrist Superstar will also overcome God and thus the power that religion holds over society:

> We are trying to save you, I have come to save you
> This is what you deserve

[32] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals; Ecce Homo*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1967) Part 24 of *Second essay: 'Guilt', 'bad conscience' and related matters.*

This is what we deserve…
…God will grovel before me

The personal apocalypse that is presented in both the album and the autobiography can be seen to be analogous with Nietzsche's Great Contempt: 'the greatest thing you can experience…the hour in which even your happiness grows loathsome to you, and your reason and your virtue also.'[33] It is the point of greatest self-doubt and inadequacy, but from the experience of which we are presented with the Overman as a redeeming, cleansing figure:

> Where is the lightning to lick you with its tongue? Where is the madness, with which you should be cleansed?
> Behold, I teach you the Superman: he is this lightning, he is this madness![34]

The image of lightning is also one connotation of the shock symbol used for that album, drawing together the notion of a 'final hero' with the figure of the avenging angel and the Nietzschean Overman. The influence of Nietzsche can also be seen in 'The Beautiful People', in the lines 'it's not your fault that you're always wrong / the weak ones are there to justify the strong' and is indicative of a philosophy which rejects the Christian notion that all men are equal. This itself is contrary to one of founding principles of the American constitution, and is part of Manson's critique of that society. All of this anticipates a change, and in this song 'capitalism has made it this way / old fashioned fascism will take it away.' The reference to fascism is also interesting in the context of the symbol used, as the shock symbol is also reminiscent of the Sigel rune used by the SS in Nazi Germany. The SS used a double rune, and it is for this reason that Rock band KISS, whose logo is such that the double S at the end echoes this symbol, use a different logo in Germany, where the display of the double S symbol is illegal. The use of the single rune is

[33], Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961) p 42.
[34] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p43.

interesting in the case of Manson as it was the Hitler Youth that used the single rune, after it was gifted to them by the SS as a symbol of the cemented relationship between the two organisations. By using the single rune Manson then places his use of it with relation to children, to the category of youth. This is particularly relevant in the context of the revenge fantasy of the child, such that we have seen with other artists. In the sense that the Wormboy grows from a child to an adult as an apocalyptic figure, he is significant of the revenge of youth over the parental generation. In the song 'The Man That You Fear' this is made explicit by 'The boy that you loved is the man that you fear', and is also seen in the authority with which the Antichrist Superstar can pronounce the faults of the figurative parent: 'you've poisoned all your children to camouflage your scars' where the parent figure is isolated and threatened: 'pray now baby, pray your life was just a dream / the world in my hands, there's no one left to hear you scream / there's no one left for you.'

Manson's use of imagery associated with fascism is strongly reminiscent of that of David Bowie, whose lightening bolt from the Aladdin Sane era was also likened to the Sigel rune as used by the Nazis.[35] In an interview in 1975 Bowie commented that the morals in Britain were 'disgusting' and that they should be 'straightened up'. This contempt for the society which allows him to be is seen as much with Manson as it is with Bowie, and what follows for both artists is similar: 'You've got to have an extreme right front come up and sweep everything off its feet and tidy everything up. Then you can get a new form of liberalism.' [36] Manson's use of Nazi symbolism, both on this album and on *Golden Age of Grotesque* is one of the more troubling points of his work, and in untangling his usage we can also examine something more about the combination of symbolism in his work.

Manson displays a clear resistance toward categorisation, as was discussed in relation to his name and the adoption of 'Marilyn Manson' to the exclusion of 'Brian Warner.' As was quoted above, he sees provocation in art as a positive force, so that art

[35] David Buckley, *Strange Fascination: David Bowie The Definitive Story*, (Virgin, London: 2005) p 253.
[36] Buckley, p. 250.

can be ‘a question mark’. As was clear from the analysis of his work that I carried out earlier in this chapter, there are a great number of sources upon which he draws for each album. Whilst there are some clear paths to be taken through this mass of information, there is a great deal which is left up to the imagination and interpretative ability of the listener. His intellectual elitism and his self-presentation as a text to be decoded functions in two (rather cynical) ways: firstly, it flatters the fan who makes the effort to decode the texts, and makes it very easy for his detractors to be labelled as simply too stupid to understand him.[37] Secondly, it allows him to retain the air of controversy that has been pivotal to his success and it allows him to straddle the divide between devoted fans and equally devoted detractors. My interpretation of the Nazi imagery he uses – the single Sigel rune and the death’s head badge with Disney ears used in the *Golden Age of Grotesque* era, for example – is that they function on a number of different levels, but each of these reflects back upon the America which he critiques, whether this be in terms of Christianity, or entertainment. Drawing on the theory of the gothic monster, I believe that this tie to his persona may be interpreted as such: that the human subject retains the capacity for evil, and that the monster reflects that which we fear we may become. To return to Judith Halberstam’s theory of the monster in contemporary gothic from Chapter Three, the experience of Nazism is such that it is no longer possible for evil to be conveniently encircled: for we now must recognise that it ‘works often as a system, it works through institutions’, it stretches ‘across cultural and political productions as complicity and collaboration and it manifests itself as a seamless norm rather than as some monstrous disruption.’[38] As has been seen in the analysis of his work earlier in the chapter, his targeting of the institutions of Christianity and national ideology, of ‘norm life’, could not be more clear, as is his contention that these institutions are possessed of dark side which they often fail to acknowledge.

[37] Later stages of his work have featured actual codes for fans to analyse, released on his website.
[38] Halberstam, p. 162.

The shock symbol associated with *Antichrist Superstar* then draws together elements of these various influences in a logo which represents the figure of transformation into an avenging angel, the purpose of which is to shock the society into which it comes into a realisation of its own faults, specifically with regard to its children. Crucially though this figure is one of redemption as well as destruction, in which Manson allies the figures of Christ and Antichrist.

Omega

The Omega or Alien figure used in association with *Mechanical Animals* is, like the Antichrist Superstar, presented as other than human. The cover art depicts Manson as Omega, leader of the fictional band 'Omega and the Mechanical Animals', as well as an androgynous alien figure who has six fingers, a reference to angelic status, and which is reminiscent of David Bowie's portrayal of the alien in *The Man Who Fell To Earth.* The album art is otherwise dominated by images of medication, and the album lyrics are dominated by images of space as a representation of the alienation of the individual. The idea of medication is here associated with the pharmaceutical and with illegal drugs, and furthermore of their use as an escape from pain, it represents numbness and disassociation. The symbol of Omega is of course representative of the end, and this and the reference to the angel connects the album's imagery to that of its predecessor. There is also a vision of another kind of apocalypse in 'The Last Day On Earth', the end of the world figured as the death of the planet, where human existence is described in terms of the fragile, 'our skin is glass', the damaged and the culpable parent: 'we are damaged provider modules / spill the seeds at our children's feet', reproduced to the level of the erasure of the image: 'I crack and split my Xerox hands.' In addition to this we are presented with the end of the human. As the title and name of the band the phrase 'Mechanical Animals' refers both to the idea of the human as machine, as de-humanised, and also to the inauthenticity of performance, the mechanism performing 'real life' animals. The band's name is in part a reference to

Bowie's Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars, reminding us that both Bowie and Manson are keen to point out the artificiality of the popular music industry. Indeed in one of the lead singles from the album Manson announces that 'Rock Is Dead'. In addition to the image of the mechanical we also apprehend the image of the 'posthuman and hardwired', in 'Posthuman'. Posthumanism is an interesting reference for the album, especially in light of the theories and philosophies of individual overcoming that were evident in the first album. The term Posthuman is culled from the field of human evolution, and refers to the concept of a being that could exceed human capabilities, such that it would no longer be recognisable as human. Its use here suggests that something of humanity has been lost, that which it is (quite literally) alienated from, specifically its emotions and capacity to feel. A related concept is the omega point, theorised by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, as the end point of the evolution of human consciousness, the most complex that it can become,[39] and it is in this sense that the concept of the alien becomes clear: as the embodiment of the non-human but whose figuration holds at its centre the absence of the human and a nostalgia for that mode of being. The use of alien imagery in popular music has been charted by Ken McLeod in his article 'Space Oddities: Aliens, Futurism and Meaning in Popular Music'[40] in which he draws connections with alienation as addressed by youth culture but also of the disappearance of the subject in postmodern culture. Drawing on Fredric Jameson's theorisation of the crisis of the subject in postmodern culture he suggests that the use of the alien, particularly in rave culture, is symptomatic of a simulated or suggested end of history, and that the images of aliens and outer space 'unite us with a common 'other' that transcends divisions of race, gender, sexual preference, religion or nationality.'[41] However, whilst the alien figure might be used in other music cultures as a positive or utopian force, as I have previously made clear with regard to the figure of the cyborg, its appearance with the contemporary gothic

[39] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon Of Man*, trans. by Bernard Wall et al. (London: Collins, 1959)
[40] Ken McLeod, 'Space Oddities: Aliens, Futurism and Meaning in Popular Music', *Popular Music*, 22.3 (2003) pp 337 – 355.
[41] Ken McLeod, p 354.

subject is to emphasise the importance of emotion and sensation to the human subject's self-conception.

The human subject's self-conception is also seen to be negatively affected by mediatised society. Reality television in the form of the chat show is addressed in 'I Don't Like The Drugs' where Manson rails against 'norm life', by which he refers to a mediatised culture in which reality is defined through one's 'fifteen minutes of shame' in a confluence of the norm-lifer's existence as only being made real though celebrity, through fifteen minutes of fame, but the nature of that brief celebrity as confessional, and as cheapening to human emotion. In 'norm life' the subject is no longer entirely human: 'I'm just a sample of a soul / made to look just like a human being', and here the use of 'sample' is taken to refer to the digitised nature of the soul such that is presented in 'Disassociative':

> But when the spirit is so digital
> the body acts this way
> that world was killing me…
> …Disassociative

In this way the soul or spirit is a replica or an imitation, the 'authentic' subject has disappeared. The prominence of replication and imitation is also seen in 'New Model No.15' which addresses the emptiness of this kind of existence:

> I'm as fake as a wedding cake
> And I'm vague and I know that I'm
> Homopolitan
> Pitifully predictable
> Correctly political
> I'm the new, I'm the new new model
> I've got nothing inside

This sense of continuing replication and lack of 'authentic' being is expressed through the image of the digitisation of existence, referenced in the Omega symbol in the inclusion of fifteen squares reminiscent of computer keys on the figure's forehead. (There are a number of occurrences of the number fifteen throughout the album, including the replacement of some letters on the front cover so that it reads 'Mar1lyn Man5son'.) The album cover is another text for decoding, such that we saw with that of the previous album. The overlay of yellow and blue ink on certain parts of the cover reveals hidden text when looked at from the correct angle, revealing at one point perhaps the key autobiographical explanation:

> In the end I became them and I led them / After all none of us really qualified as humans / We were hardworn automatic and as hollow as the "O" in God / I reattached my emotions cellular and narcotic / From the top of Hollywood it looked like space / Millions of capsules and Mechanical Animals / A city filled with dead stars and a girl I called Coma White / This is my Omega[42]

Again Manson refers to himself as a leader, juxtaposing this leadership with that of models provided by Christianity.

The effect of the Omega / Alien persona is to suggest a subject not possessed of 'the real', no longer human but in mourning for that state of being, the product of the social context and which seeks in many ways to bring about its end. The dominant structures of safety-harm-risk are attacked in the image of norm life, sanitised, normalised, equalised through dope (a play on the vernacular for drugs and also as an insult meaning stupid), made risk free, distanced from pain in order to escape the horror of feeling, and drained of passion.

[42] Coma White is a character which is loosely associated with a previous girlfriend of Manson's, and the recording studio in which they made the album looked down over Hollywood, to which there is a potential reference here.

Mercury

Manson's identification with the alchemical symbol for mercury occurred in the December of 1999, after the Columbine shootings and prior to the release of *Holy Wood*, the album that bears this symbol, and which is in part a response to the Columbine shootings and Manson's treatment by the media in the aftermath of the event. On the 15th December 1999 Manson announced on his website that the he would now be identified with the alchemical symbol for mercury. He posted a message on his website explaining the new symbol:

> The new symbol that I'll be using to represent myself is the symbol of mercury. The symbol is most commonly used in alchemy. It represents both the androgen and the prima material which has been associated with Adam, the first man. All these things are major influences into the writing of the new album. I encourage you to do your own research on these, but from now on you will recognise me by this symbol and this symbol alone.[43]

This announcement was taken by much of the music press that reported it to be comparable to the fashion in which Prince identified himself with a symbol in June 1993, an unpronounceable glyph which served in part as a creative escape from contractual obligations, consequently he reverted to Prince once that contract had expired. In response to these reports Manson issued a further statement on the 19th December:

> I have adopted the symbol of Mercury and shed my skin once again to feed the fake. My name is still Marilyn Manson. And I am here to stay and make each of you that fears, doubts, laughs at or hates me suffer as much as possible.[44]

His irritation at having to make the clarification is palpable - 'I want to make a statement to clarify to those too quick to judge or too stupid to understand what I said earlier this week'

[43] Reported on BBC Radio 1, archived article 'Marilyn Manson's symbol' found at <www.bbc.co.uk/radio1/artist_area/mansonmarilyn/> accessed June 07
[44] BBC, 'Marilyn Manson's symbol'.

and betrays perhaps the degree of control which Manson prefers to have over his reception or presentation in the media. Furthermore, in line with the resistance to categorisation that I discussed with regard to the Antichrist Superstar figure, Manson's resistance here strongly suggests an abandonment of character couched in the tradition of fictional narrative and theatrical performance which seeks to demarcate the boundaries between artist and art.

The alchemical significance refers to the association of the seven planets of ancient astronomy with a metal – Sun / Gold, Moon / Silver, Mercury / Quicksilver (mercury), Venus / Copper, Mars / Iron, Jupiter / Tin, Saturn / Lead – each representing 'various degrees of maturity or illness of the same basic material on its way to perfection, to gold.'[45] This transformation is representative of spiritual self-actualisation and in many Gnostic myths it is the manner in which man must 'heal the sick organism of the world.' In this way the alchemical search for perfection is part of a philosophy of an understanding of the universe that was not separated from the understanding of the self.

The association with Adam, the primordial man, such that Manson describes in his initial statement is mirrored in the album artwork, where the songs are divided into four sections; 'In the Shadow', 'The Androgyne', 'Of Red Earth' and 'The Fallen'. Each of these sections is assigned a letter of ADAM. The significance of the figure of Adam is as a divine origin, which was dispersed and which seeks to be reunified. The fall of Adam is seen as the cause of this:

> Before the Fall, according to the Gnostic-Cabalistic myths, the whole of heaven was a single human being of fine material, the giant, androgynous, primordial Adam, who is now in every human being, in the shrunken form of this invisible body [the 'astral body' invisibly surrounding man, the indication of the cosmic soul, aspects which pertain to the divine intellect], and who is waiting to be brought back to heaven.'[46]

[45] Alexander Roob, *Alchemy and Mysticism*, 2nd ed., (London, Taschen: 2005). p. 19.
[46] Roob, p. 20.

Adam Kadmon, the primordial man, is also the name of the sephiroth – the cabalistic tree of life – as laid out on the human body. The utmost point of the tree is associated with the head chakra, also known as the thousand petal lotus. Images of Manson with a flower growing out of his head in the style of illustrations of the head of Adam Kadmon in the cover art suggest perhaps that the Adam of *Holy Wood* is on an alchemical-cabbalistic search for self-actualisation. Once again we are presented with a hermetic philosophy that stands in contrast to the Christian belief of America, as well as a formation which is centred in transformation as an overcoming, as a progression. Mercury represents the fluidity of change, philosophical mercury (as oppose to quicksilver) is the beginning and end of the alchemical work, the dew which according to the Zohar flows down the tree of life from the head of Adam Kadmon. The androgen, which links us back to the Alien figure of *Mechanical Animals,* figures in this context as a reference to the primordial man. Linked to this is the place of the hermaphrodite as the union of opposites, a duality which underlies much of Manson's work, the union of opposition, the glamorous and the violent. In addition to these references we are also reminded of the identification of the early American country's identification with Adam as described in Chapter Four.

The death of the celebrity, and the making of celebrity in death are prominent themes in this phase of Manson's work. The theme of parental betrayal also features more strongly than in previous works. Youth is devalued as 'disposable', and this devaluation and the revenge fantasy of the child coalesce in 'Disposable Teens':

> I wanna thank you mom
> I wanna thank you dad
> For bringing this fucking world
> To a bitter end…
> …We're disposable teens

Again here the apocalyptic image is used to mimic the end of history and the denial of the future for the child. This image is repeated throughout the album, for instance in 'Cruci-

Fiction in Space', where the last two lines in the following quotation are also sung by a backing vocal of a higher-pitched child-like voice:

> This is evolution
> The monkey
> The man
> Then the gun
> We are dead and tomorrow's cancelled
> Because of things we did yesterday

And is taken further in 'The Death Song':

> We light a candle on an earth
> We made into hell…
> …We sing the death song kids
> Because we've got no future
> And we wanna be just like you…
> …We were the world
> But we've got no future
> And we want to be just like you

There are also references throughout the album to a return to God, and a desire for a saviour in contemporary icons, such as the likening of John F. Kennedy to Christ, the central position of death in Christian philosophy, and of the place of violence in American society. There is a recurrent reference to death as a commodity, centred upon the figure of the child, for example in 'The Fight Song':

> You'll never grow up to be a big-rock-star-celebrated-victim-of-your-fame
> They'll just cut our wrists like
> Cheap coupons and say that death
> Was on sale today

And again, associating religion and capitalist transaction in 'President Dead':

The bitter thinkers buy their tickets
To find god like a piggy in a fair
And we don't want to live forever
And we know that suffering is so much better

And also with 'In the Shadow of the Valley of Death':

We have no future
Heaven wasn't made for me
We burn ourselves to hell
As fast as it can be
And I wish that I could be a king
Then I'd know that I was not alone
Maggots put on shirts
Sell each others shit
Sometimes I feel so worthless
Sometimes I feel discarded
I wish that I was good enough
Then I'd know that I was not alone

Here the inadequacy that the individual feels is closely associated to his isolation and alienation from social structures of community, and the emptying effects of an advanced capitalist society – of which, of course, Manson is a part.

With regard to the effects of the mass media, and particularly television, there are two key songs to consider: 'The Nobodies' and 'The Lamb of God.' Salvation – in being a 'somebody' – comes in the form of death, infamy as a dead media celebrity. 'The Nobodies', a song already discussed in Chapter Four, can be read as a direct response to the Columbine shootings in this respect, the song suggesting that televisualisation and the mediatisation of life have come to represent our measure of human emotion. Further evidence of this can be found in 'Target Audience (Narcissus Narcosis)':

And I see all the young believers
Your target audience
And I see all the old deceivers
And we all just sing their song
You're just a copy of an imitation

This is continued in 'The Lamb of God'; perhaps the album's most scathing attack on the televisualisation of human experience:

The camera will make you god
That's how Jack became sainted
If you die when there's no one watching
Then your ratings drop and you're forgotten
But if they kill you on their TV
You're a martyr and a lamb of god

In contrast to the self-styling as leader in the previous two albums, this song indicates a Manson more cynical about the possibilities for change – the above lines are followed by 'Nothings gonna change the world', which themselves ironically recall The Beatles' altogether more contented 'Across The Universe'. This sense of pessimism connects strongly with the violent denial of the future as shown in 'The Death Song': 'We sing the death song kids / Because we've got no future'.

The hermetic philosophers' approach to symbolism, the combination of sensation and the intellectual, using the senses to reach the intellect, 'aimed at man's intuitive insight into the essential connections, not at his discursive abilities, which is largely held to be a destructive force'[47] – seems particularly appropriate here given Manson's layered use of symbolism. Mercury constantly escapes, it is defined by its changeability, and it is here I believe that Manson's use of the image is crucial in relation to the events of the Columbine shootings. The explicit use of the Mercury symbol, as well as its alchemical significance and the related connotations of Adam and early America allowed Manson to retreat but

[47] Roob, p.11-12.

also to create a space in which he could critique the American society in which such events had taken place.

The Spectacular and the Hyperreal

There are two theoretical contexts in which I wish to place the symbolic entities employed by Manson as I have described above. The theory of the spectacle, as put forward by Guy Debord, and the theory of the hyperreal developed by Jean Baudrillard. The spectacular subjectivity is a term that I will use here to denote a particular kind of existence through media stardom, which can be described as subjectivity-as-commodity in the realm of popular culture. The spectacular subjectivity is a product of and dependent upon the mass media, and as such recourse is needed to a theorisation of contemporary society grounded in that society's relationship with the mass media and its relationship to developed capitalism. In *The Society of the Spectacle* (1968), Guy Debord argued that 'the whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles.*'[48] He describes the society of the spectacle as that where 'all that once was directly experienced has become mere representation' and the spectacle as 'very heart of society's real unreality.'[49] The image then is the most developed form of the commodity, and the spectacle is a social relationship mediated by images. He asserts that the society of the spectacle is 'in thrall to the global domination of a *banalizing* trend'[50] whereby commodity culture, far from increasing choice, constricts and controls it. He argues that even rebelliousness could be co-opted, as 'dissatisfaction itself becomes a commodity as soon as the economics of affluence finds a way of applying its production methods to his particular raw material.' This is particularly relevant in terms of the mainstreaming of Popular Metal and Goth culture, and of the emergence of 'Alternative' as a marketing category, in that it presents to

[48] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*. (Zone, New York: 1994) trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. p12. Emphasis in text.
[49] Debord, p13.
[50] Debord, p38. Emphasis in text.

us the manner in which both rebellion and alienation can and have been co-opted. Most pertinent to the discussion here however is his assertion that 'media stars are spectacular representations of living human beings' and furthermore that they are 'the opposite of an individual'.[51] The celebrity, in so far as we can assume a logic of identification with them on the part of the spectator, is a performative construction, in that its portrayal exists only in the mass media, and yet the celebrity performs the idea of a real person. It should be noted that my use of the term 'celebrity' here is analogous with Richard Dyer's use of 'star'. The spectacular subjectivity is performative, a type of subjectivity which I would argue is only supportable in contemporary society, based as it is upon the developed mass media which deals in the fabrication of the image. What is at stake here is the definition of the real. Authenticity performs the real for various forms of Rock music, as I have previously discussed, but is problematic because of the contested nature of 'the real'. Our central problem is then this: as me move toward a state where representation and simulation replace distinctiveness, the self increasingly only gains status as a commodity.

Jean Baudrillard, however, argues that we have gone beyond the society of the spectacle:

> We are no longer in the society of the spectacle which the situationists talked about, nor in the specific types of alienation and repression which this implied. The medium itself is no longer identifiable as such, and the merging of the medium and the message is the first great formula of this new age. There is no longer any medium in the literal sense: it is now intangible, diffuse and diffracted in the real, and it can no longer even be said that the latter is distorted by it.[52]

The real now collapses into the hyperreal, 'the real is not only what can be reproduced, but *that which is always already reproduced.*'[53] The real is duplicated through a reproductive medium, and there is no longer space for reflection on the spectacle, there is no distance

[51] Debord, p39.

[52] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*. (New York: Semiotext(e)) 1983. p 54
[53] Baudrillard, *Simulations*, p 146.

between the thing created and the thing lived. Baudrillard proposes the advent of the hyperreal as the death or murder of reality, and posits the establishment of Virtuality. Virtuality is concerned with technological perfection, instead of being a spectator of the image we are 'actors in the performance, and actors increasingly integrated into the course of that performance.'[54] Technological perfection takes the form of 'High Definition' in many spheres, the image, time, music, sex and thought. In the search for this perfection, for the 'definitive' version, 'referential substance becomes increasingly rare.'[55] What I take from this is that art and creativity are in a sense under threat – or in Baudrillard's terms, reaching a limit – because we are living in an age where lived experience cannot be reflected upon. One of the ways in which this fear of the merging of the real into the hyperreal can be seen is in the fear that forms of the reproduced cannot be sufficiently distinguished from the real thing. Popular culture, which I would argue is at the very heart of Baudrillard's hyperreal, is at the centre of a concern over the unmanageability of mediatisation, and disappearance of the real is a source of terror.

These theories of the relationship between reality and representation are particularly useful for a discussion of Manson and his presentation of subjectivity because they allow the creation of a space in which to think about performance and representation that can be linked to the difficulty of ascribing value on the grounds of authenticity within popular music, and the value of the contemporary gothic as a mode in which to relate to 'the real', as suggested earlier in this study. The spectacular is based upon the fabrication of the image and the inauthenticity of the human behind the media celebrity, however the hyperreal suggests the collapse of this distinction, and crucially, the lack of distance between the thing created and the thing lived, which allows for the appearance of a relationship with 'the real' through – and only through – performance.

This collapse can be seen to be in operation in the way that Manson has described his presentation of self, as being understood to exceed a stage persona: "I live this life, I'm

[54] Jean Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime*. (London, Verso: 1996) Trans. Chris Turner. p 27.
[55] Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime*, p 29-30.

stuck with this life…I don't exactly know how to describe it, but Marilyn Manson is a 24-hour thing. It's not something I can turn off",[56]… 'when I say 'characters', I'm putting it in layman's terms, because I don't feel like I'm playing a role.'[57] This is significant in relation to other artists such as KISS or Alice Cooper, for whom a clear distinction can be made between the off-stage artist and their on-stage performance persona, where that persona is particularly theatrical, or intended to shock. In this case the performer can always distance himself from the character, and so any intended message of the performance, such as shock value, is perhaps lessened because of the distance put between the performer and the character. We can then discount both 'character' and 'stage persona' as accurate descriptions of his subjectivity, as although there are elements of both which feed into the whole, they are inadequate means with which to describe Manson's metamorphoses, if we insist on the separation of artist and art. Manson sees no such distinction: 'Everything I do is indicative of me as an artist. I don't separate myself from my art.'[58] This has its antecedents in performance art. In his history of American avant garde theatre, Arnold Aronson cites a desire within certain artists of the twentieth century to:

> Eliminate the mediating effect of the artwork altogether as a means of erasing the boundaries between art and life and to confront the spectator directly…there was also a desire, particularly in the postwar decades, to subvert the commodification of art. The artists stepped out from behind the canvas, as it were, presenting themselves or their actions as the art work, thereby substituting process or action for a tangible product that could be bought and sold. [59]

This blurring of boundaries between life and art is situated by Aronson as part of a tradition which incorporates the Futurists, Dadaists and Surrealists; artists who 'became living embodiments of their art work, which extended in a continuum from their daily lives

[56] Eric Snider, 'Confessions of an All American Antichrist', *Jam*, February 17, 1995.
[57] 'Manson: "This is my Holy Wood…"', *Kerrang!*, Feb 2000 with reference to *Holy Wood*
[58] Kerrang! 1109 May 27 2006, p30
[59] Arnold Aronson, *American Avant-Garde Theatre: A History*. (London: Routledge, 2000) p156-7.

through their passage through the street to formally conceived performances. Art was not a manufactured object but a state of mind or way of life.'[60] For Manson this understanding of the artist as his art is made most explicit on *The Golden Age Of Grotesque*, in particular on the song '(s)AINT': 'But now I'm not an artist I'm a fucking work of art' and in 'Vodevil': 'This isn't music and we're not a band / We're five middle fingers on a motherfucking hand.' There is, of course, a distinct divergence between Manson's statement and the drive within performance art that Aronson discusses in terms of the commodity, as although Manson may align his self with his art, his success as an artist is entirely dependent upon commodity culture. This tension could be seen in his commentary on his work in film: in an interview with Austin Scaggs in *Rolling Stone* in July 2005, Manson stated 'I no longer want to make art that other people - particularly record companies - are turning into a product…I just want to make art',[61] and in an interview with *ID* magazine for their Horror issue in 2006,[62] with regard to the expected release of his directorial debut, *Phantasmagoria: The Visions of Lewis Carroll*, and his painting, staking out the difference of his art from just entertainment: 'The difference between the two is an entertainer will stop when they finish performing but artists live for art.'

The symbols Manson uses can be understood at one level to be logos, brand identities, each associated with a particular commodity, a particular album. The reasoning behind this understanding is to underline the participation of subjectivity in popular music as part of a culture of commodity. It is distinguished from character because the act of playing a role assumes a distance between the performer and the performed; but in the framework of the spectacular and the hyperreal no such distinction exists.

[60] Aronson, p 60.
[61] Interview with Austin Scaggs, *Rolling Stone*, July 15, 2005.
[62] Interview with David Michael, July 2006, issue 267, p 178.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the work of Marilyn Manson as a key example of contemporary gothic subjectivity, paying particular attention to the symbol-personas he inhabited for each era of the tryptych of albums *Antichrist Superstar*, *Mechanical Animals*, and *Holy Wood*. As an example of contemporary gothic subjectivity his work can be seen to engage with those themes and concerns which I have identified throughout this thesis and indeed in some cases to take them much further than the other artists whose work I have studied here, especially with regard to the figure of the child. In presenting himself as the ultimate other to American society, he willingly takes on the role of hate figure and uses it to critique the dominant social and moral discourses of the American national context in which he is placed.

Manson's reticence to make a distinction between his private self and the layers of his star persona functions as an attempt to prevent his work being relegated to a 'character', and as we can see from the interview excerpts above, he clearly places great stock in his status as an artist rather than a commodity. However, his work remains caught in the contradiction of being part of commodity culture, without which he would not have been able to achieve the level of notoriety which is necessary for the perpetuation of his role as an ultimate other to American society.

Conclusion

Throughout the course of this thesis I have identified a particular kind of subjectivity which is discernable in the work of contemporary American Popular Metal artists during the period 1994-2004. Using the contemporary and American gothics as a context for this subject, and based on the theory that stars represent ways of being in contemporary society, I have constructed a model of the contemporary gothic subject, which has been used as a tool for investigation in richly symbolic areas of the music and culture under the headings of the body, the grotesque and monstrous, and the child.

Central to this subject's identity has been the notion of crisis. As I set out in the introduction, this sense of crisis is intensely personal, and is based largely around issues of identity. Using the contemporary gothic's concern with and return to issues of trauma as a context, this notion of crisis has been shown to be a concern with truth, a search for 'the real', and the erosion of the future as a symbolic construct. This was linked to the recurrent notion of authenticity in popular music, and in particular, Alan Moore's theorisation of the value of authenticity as a tool for the analysis of popular music, which states that authenticity is always authenticity for someone, that it is based around the idea that the artist be seen to reveal the truth of his situation and that of others. Furthermore, the confession of trauma has been shown to be central to the process of subject formation, such that the subject discovers itself, positively constitutes itself, through the act of confession, based on the model provided by Foucault.

This pervasive sense of crisis with regard to identity and truth is also reflected in the contemporary gothic subject's concern with the body and with painful or violent experience. The lyrical sources showed a recurrent use of terms of physical pain to refer to emotional trauma, with particular reference to images of cutting, bleeding, and bruising. Here, drawing on theories of pain and the body project, the process of corporeal verification was suggested as the means by which the contemporary gothic subject lends

solidity to uncertainty. Furthermore, issues of safety, harm and risk were argued to be at stake through such processes as body modification and consensual violence. Acts of modification or violence to the body were argued to be key sites of the subject's ability to exert control. Notions of control, release and abjection were also used to contextualise the appearance of self-harm as a lyrical image. Where self-harm appears within the culture it has been contextualised with reference to issues of control, and as a maladaptive coping strategy.

The subject's sense of being an outsider was analysed within the context of the grotesque and the monstrous. I have argued that the world of the contemporary gothic subject is the world of the grotesque, and that in this world the subject takes on the position of the monstrous. Drawing on theories of the gothic monster, and particularly the shift in the construction of the gothic monster within the grotesque, I argued that the subject is involved in a negotiation of the boundaries of self and other, where the gothic monster reflects back on the human subject as at least partially monstrous. The subject takes on the role of the monster, and in doing so is afforded a position from which to critique notions of the 'normal' world. This sense of monstrosity is expressed through notions of sickness, disease and infection, as well as physical deformity, for example.

The subject can furthermore be seen to negotiate the subject position of victim and threat, and where vulnerability is experienced it is often, particularly with the male subject, countered with violence or representations of dominant masculinity. In some cases, the male subject is seen to identify with the figure of the 'little girl' as a representative of innocence and vulnerability. The figure of the child is an important notion in this context, as the child can be a representative of both innocence and aggression, through the figure of the Vengeful child. This model that I have suggested is to be contextualised in the tradition of the child as monster within gothic horror, in such figures as the Evil Innocent and the Gothic child. In the American context, this figure has particular resonance in terms

of national identity and national selfhood, which Marilyn Manson utilises to significant effect.

Manson has been shown to be a key example of contemporary gothic subjectivity, taking on the role of ultimate other to American society in his work, and conflating the three levels of star identity in order to produce a figure which is not easily separable from the artwork, especially where these are both represented by a symbol. Manson's use of symbolism in his work is connected to his ideas of intellectual elitism, the notion of art as a 'question mark', and presenting himself as a code for investigation.

There are clearly some contradictions to be found within the realm of the contemporary gothic subject as I have portrayed it here – particularly with regard to its situation within commodity culture and its various searches for truth and 'the real' within that culture. Body modification in particular represents one such contested area, where the marking or modification of the skin's surface can be seen as both a powerful site of resistance and as an activity which is bounded within commodity culture insofar as these types of marks have been removed from a context of communal rites.

Throughout the thesis I utilised textual analysis of lyrical sources as my main methodological approach. Although this has largely fallen from favour within the academic study of popular music I believe that the manner in which I have used it here goes some way to mapping out an approach which can be profitably used in the future. In addition, in situating this study with reference to the contemporary gothic, I believe that I have positively contributed to this emerging area of study, in which as yet not a great deal of attention has been given to popular music. Drawing on the theory of the 'star' as an articulation of individuality in contemporary society, approaching the subject as a text, the lyric as discourse, and concentrating on the production of the self through language, allows for an investigation of the star in popular music which is largely absent from the academic approach to this subject matter. In terms of finding a way to re-integrate the study of lyrics into an analysis of popular music, I believe that my methodological approach achieved this

aim. Primarily, that a model of subjectivity specific to a particular group of artists might be identified and usefully employed in the exploration of that area. The use of textual analysis allowed for a detailed examination of both the use of language and the portrayal or creation of the self through language, for example with regard to the use of particular vocabulary, as it occurs in the work of one particular artist and also in terms of common traits which may be observed across the work of a group of artists. The dangers in using such an approach: that the reading may become overly personal, that it may unfairly weight analysis toward the linguistic, excluding other factors such as sound or image, or suggesting that the totality of meaning in a song might be derived solely from its lyrics, were for the most part avoided. At certain points in the thesis I aimed to avoid these types of dangers with specific action. That is, by varying the methodological approach in order to take some account of the audience for Popular Metal, and by examining other features such as image and album cover design. I believe that future work in this area would benefit from extending this sort of action, particularly with regard to image. I also believe that attention to issues such as sound might add depth, and assist in any analysis of audience so as to further avoid potentially identifying the audience solely with the subject as it is portrayed in lyrics.

The concepts of consensual violence and corporeal verification, as well as the vengeful child, are key tools of the thesis. However my main achievement is to have established the construct figure of the contemporary gothic subject. The subject which is in crisis and is engaged in a search for the real; for whom subject formation and issues of identity are tied to the confession of trauma and control of the body; which uses the monstrous to critique the 'normal' world, and the figure of the child to explore the relationship between victim and threat.

The main benefit of the work that I have done here, aside from those methodological issues discussed above, stem from the interdisciplinary focus of the thesis, which participates in the fields of cultural studies, literary studies, and popular music

studies. The academic study of popular music is by nature an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary endeavour, within which one will encounter both particular difficulties as well as possibilities. The figure of the contemporary gothic subject and vengeful child, notions of consensual violence and corporeal verification, and the application of the theory of the monstrous and grotesque to the figure at hand could not have been developed without bringing together diverse theoretical sources. In terms of the development of further study, I would suggest that the subject-construct which I developed with regard to the contemporary gothic subject could be replicated for other types of music, and believe that this would be revealing in terms of the approach to subjectivity which could be found in any particular subgenre.

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